

Assad undergoes successful surgery

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad has undergone a successful prostate operation, the official SANA news agency reported on Tuesday. The agency did not give the date or place of the operation nor the exact nature of his condition. It said Mr. Assad would resume his activities in the next few days but gave no other details. Information about Mr. Assad's health is rarely disclosed by Damascus. In September, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller suggested that Assad was not in good health, allegations vehemently denied by Syrian officials. Born into a peasant family from Qardaha in northern Syria, Mr. Assad has been head of state since March 1971. Mr. Assad's age is given officially as 66 but some put his age at 68.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordanian Press Syndicate Foundation
جوردان تايمز مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية، الوائ

Volume 22 Number 6423

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 1997, SHAABAN 28, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Israel seeks 20-month delay in withdrawals after Hebron accord

Palestinians reject demand to change Oslo schedule; Netanyahu wants to strengthen hand in final status talks

OCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said Tuesday an Israeli demand to delay by two years a promised troop pullback from West Bank areas was a key obstacle to a deal on handing over most of Hebron town to Palestinian self-rule.

U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross renewed his mediation efforts between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Netanyahu spokesman David Bar-Ilan said Israel and the PNA agreed on most points but were wrangling over peace moves to follow Hebron.

Mr. Bar-Ilan confirmed Israel wanted to postpone to 1999 the last of three Israeli redeployments from occupied rural West Bank areas which under a 1995 interim peace deal were to be completed by September 1997.

"The last redeployment is a very, very contentious issue. Our interpretations are very far apart," he told Reuters.

Mr. Bar-Ilan said Mr.

Netanyahu proposed to Mr. Ross in a pre-dawn meeting that Israel complete further West Bank pullouts by the spring of 1999, when the sides are slated to complete "final status" peace negotiations.

"When the final status talks are set to end we will implement the last redeployment because we will then know in which areas there will be a Palestinian authority," he said.

Palestinian negotiators immediately rejected the Israeli demand.

"We reject this completely," said Marwan Kanafani, spokesman for the Palestinian negotiators.

"This is a violation of (signed) agreements and shows who is really behind the delay in reaching an accord" on Hebron.

"The mere fact that he is mentioning this, that he wants a linkage between the final status of the negotiations and the further redeployment is... a total breach of the (Oslo) agreements," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said.

"This is an irresponsible proposal... The agreement

specifically states that the last stage of further redeployments from the West Bank be completed by Sept. 7, 1997," negotiator Hassan Asfour said.

"I wish that Mr. Netanyahu will stick to the agreement and will honour his commitments to implement the agreements as they were signed," Mr. Erakat told reporters.

Mr. Kanafani said a final agreement on Hebron and the further steps in implementing self-rule, had appeared imminent Monday after a secret overnight session of talks between Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Arafat and Mr. Ross.

"But then we saw setbacks in the late afternoon when the Israelis retreated on basic principles that had been agreed by both Netanyahu and Arafat," he said.

Several Israeli newspapers revealed Tuesday that Mr. Netanyahu, in his talks Sunday with Mr. Arafat, said he did not want to complete the already agreed three-phase pullback of troops on the West

King holds talks with IMF chief

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received International Monetary Fund (IMF) Director General Michel Camdessus and reviewed with him scopes of cooperation between Jordan and the IMF.

King Hussein stressed Jordan's keenness to follow up its economic reform programme to achieve comprehensive development (see story on page 3).

The King referred to the



(Continued on page 7)

King Hussein receives leaders of Islamic Movement in Israel

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received Sheikh Abdul Nasser Darwish, head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, and Knesset member Abdul Malek Dahamsheh who are currently on a visit to Jordan. Mr. Dahamsheh and Mr. Darwish lauded the King's efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the region and to achieve stability and prosperity for its peoples.

They expressed the Arab Israelis' appreciation to King Hussein for his support to

their causes and for the services Jordan provides for them to maintain interaction and communication with their Arab brethren in Jordan and the Arab World.

Mr. Darwish outlined the importance of moderation and tolerance in dealing with the current situation, noting that Islam has advocated for moderation and tolerance.

Attending the meeting was Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, His Royal Highness Prince Talal and director of the National Security Council.

Kabariti delivers King's message to Sultan Qaboos

MUSCAT (Agencies) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Tuesday delivered a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Sultan Qaboos Ben Said of Oman. The message dealt with bilateral relations.

Mr. Kabariti reviewed with Sultan Qaboos Jordanian-Omani relations and Arab and international issues of common concern.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Kabariti met with Omani Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahd Ben Mahmud Al Said and discussed with him means to developing bilateral ties.

Mr. Kabariti, who returned home late Tuesday, also discussed with Sheikh Fahd the latest developments in the region, including the Middle East peace process.

In a statement to Omani Television, Mr. Kabariti said the future and strategic vision of both Jordan and Oman was identical and the two countries shared identical political vision.

Mr. Kabariti urged Israel to sign the long-delayed agreement with the Palestinians on an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank flashpoint town of Hebron.

"We hope all the obstacles (to the deal) will be lifted and that the current crisis will dissipate," Mr. Kabariti told the Omani minister, the Omani News Agency reported.

Mr. Kabariti said Jordan determined that there were "many negative signs from the Israeli side and we have deployed our efforts with the help of other Arab countries to try to save the peace process."

An agreement on Hebron will lead to resumption of talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks on clear bases to achieve a durable, just and comprehensive peace in the region in the near future, Mr. Kabariti said.

Mr. Kabariti arrived in Muscat on Monday night and was the guest of honour at a banquet held by Sheikh Fahd. The dinner was attended by the Jordanian delegation accompanying Mr. Kabariti and Jordan's ambassador in Muscat.

Oman last month froze steps towards normalising ties with Israel and recalled its trade delegate from Tel Aviv for consultations in protest at the headline policies of the new Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Family of 9 suffocates to death in south Jordan

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The bodies of nine including five children who died of suffocation on Monday in a tragic fire accident in a village in southern Tafilah Governorate, were laid to rest Tuesday.

His Majesty King Hussein, Prince Royal Highnesses Prince Hassan and Prince Mohammad, and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Tuesday sent delegates to participate in the funeral and to offer condolences for the grieving Hamran Family.

Civil Defence Department (CDD) Tafilah Director Major Akel Obaidat told the Jordan Times Tuesday that the cause of the accident which occurred at 8:00 p.m. was leakage from a gas heater.

Ismael Lafi Hamran, 55, his wife Amineh 40, and their children, Sana, 18, Ahmad, 15, Sufian, 12, Salah, 10, Leith, eight, Mannar, five, and Omar, two were all killed in the incident.

"The family all went to sleep in a room with two heaters; one kerosene run which was on, and a gas heater which was off but was leaking," Maj. Obaidat said.

According to Maj. Obaidat's reconstruction of the incident, gas filled the small room in which the family was sleeping, and was ignited by flames from the kerosene heater. Fire spread and engulfed the entire room.

Maj. Obaidat said that the family used a gas regulator that was not meant for the sort of heater and that the gas pressure led to the regulator's bursting, causing gas to rush out and catch fire.

Neighbours and eyewitnesses who gathered in front of the house after seeing fumes coming out of the windows tried to rescue the family but failed because the front door was locked and all the windows were secured by iron bars.

One neighbour who reported the fire said that he saw the father trying to escape the blaze through one room window but failed "because he could not remove the window grill."

It took CDD units three minutes to extinguish the flame and prevent it from spreading to surrounding houses.

The official said the family members suffered from various degrees of burns, stressing that suffocation, not fire, was the cause of death.

Three family members, one daughter, Maysonn, 25, and two sons Yasser, 22, and Jasser, 22, survived.

The daughter is married and lives in a separate house, the two sons were members of the Armed Forces and were serving in their bases during the accident.

In December of 1995, four Egyptian nationals were killed in north Marka after inhaling carbon monoxide. The men had went to sleep with wood burning in a barrel in their room.

Al Rai' correspondent in Tafilah Ghazi Anarini contributed to this report.

Baghdad says 2 suspects confessed to murdering Jordanian embassy driver

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Saudi and a Jordanian have confessed to the November killing of the driver of a Jordanian embassy car last year in a case that threatened to undermine Amman-Baghdad relations, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Monday.

Sources said meanwhile that Iraqi authorities had also informed a charity organisation in Amman that they had solved an earlier murder in which the driver of a Jordanian truck carrying sugar to Iraq was killed and the cargo stolen.

The body of embassy driver Omar Ali Sobh was found in the Iraqi desert after he went missing on a regular run between Amman and Baghdad in November. Missing were the embassy car and a diplomatic pouch, whose contents included 250 blank passports.

INA said a Jordanian and a Saudi were arrested in connection with the killing. INA identified the two suspects as Zaban Basrah Khadiji Al Rueli, a Saudi national, and Nasser Bantur Al Bashir Al Rueli, a Jordanian, and said a third suspect, Syrian Trad Al Hala-by, was still at large.

INA said the Syrian could have escaped to Syria or Jordan and that the Iraqi government had asked the International Police Organisation (Interpol) for his arrest so that he could be tried along with the others.

It was not known whether the two Ruelis were related. Jordan and Saudi Arabia share a border in the south and families of the same bedouin tribe live on both sides of the border.

INA said the three were drug smugglers who used to run drugs into Saudi Arabia from Turkey through Syria and Jordan, and they

(Continued on page 7)

Palestinian boy crashes car into Israeli shop; 1 killed, 6 injured

Poll finds increasing support for armed resistance against Israelis

OCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A Palestinian teenager killed one person and injured six others Tuesday when he crashed a stolen car into a crowded bakery on the edge of Jerusalem's main Jewish market, police said.

The driver, a 16-year-old East Jerusalem resident, was taken away by police but it was not immediately known if he lost control of the car or acted intentionally, police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Rubi told AFP.

One person died in hospital of injuries suffered in the crash and six others were admitted to two Jerusalem hospitals, two of them in serious condition, a police spokesman said.

Mr. Ben-Rubi said the youth had no previous police record or driver's licence and had taken the car from his Israeli employer earlier in the day. Since the suspect was a minor, his identity was withheld.

Witnesses said the youth drove the stolen black Ford Sierra at high speed through the bakery's front window from a street running perpendicular to the shop, located next to an entrance into West Jerusalem's main produce market.

They said the Ford was struck by a second vehicle as it crossed the street running in front of the bakery or might have entered the market itself, causing far worse casualties.

"I was taking bread out of the oven with my back to the window when I heard the car come across the road and all the glass break," said Amnon Haba, 32, a bakery

employee.

A passing border police patrol immediately detained the youth and witnesses said he made no declarations nor showed any sign of hostility.

But standing amid the scattered shoes, broken glass and blood on the bakery's floor, Ovadia Haba, 55, was adamant the driver acted on purpose.

"Of course he intended to do this, he came all the way across the road, what could have been his aim," he said. "He couldn't have lost control, there was no rain, no oil, he wanted to kill."

Support for armed attacks

Palestinian support for armed attacks against Israeli targets jumped over the past nine months in the absence of progress in the peace process, according to an opinion poll released Tuesday.

But the survey by the Nablus-based Centre for Palestine Research and Studies also found that the vast majority of Palestinians support the Oslo peace process launched by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel's former Labour government.

The poll, carried out in late December among 1,300 adults in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, found that 40 per cent of those queried backed armed attacks against Israeli targets, compared to only 22 per cent in March.

Khalil Shiqaqi, director of the Nablus centre, attributed the higher acceptance of violence to frustration over the lack of progress in the self-rule process since right-wing

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power following May elections.

Respondents were also apparently influenced by September clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian police and protestors which left 86 dead, and by a December attack by Palestinians which killed two West Bank settlers, he said.

Backing for anti-Israeli violence reached 70 per cent among Palestinians who identified themselves as supporters of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which has carried out numerous suicide attacks to torpedo peace agreements with Israel.

The survey nevertheless found that 79 per cent of Palestinians supported the peace process with Israel, compared to 70 per cent three months ago.

On other questions, the survey found that 57 per cent of Palestinians identified official corruption as the biggest problem facing the development of autonomy and 52 per cent said it was impossible to criticise Palestinian President Yasser Arafat without fear. "The Palestinian public is not optimistic regarding the future of democracy in Palestine," Mr. Shiqaqi said in a report accompanying the poll results.

Yet 56 per cent of those queried said they were comfortable dealing with the Palestinian National Authority and 55 per cent expressed confidence that the Palestinian judicial system would be able to rectify injustices in the nascent self-rule system.

Islamic Action Front, Syrian Baathists sign memo on 'joint vision'

AMMAN (Agencies) — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) party of Jordan and the Syrian Baath Socialist Party (SBSP) have signed a memorandum reflecting their "joint vision and stand with regard to the challenges facing the Arab Nation" and agreed on pursuing cooperation at the various levels, especially in the parliamentary and political fields, an IAF statement said Tuesday.

The agreement appeared to mark years of sometimes bloody rivalry between the Syrian regime and Islamists.

The official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said the memorandum aims at "unifying Arab potential to meet challenges faced by the Arab Nation."

It cited as a major challenge "the continuation of the Israeli aggression and its occupation of Arab land."

The agreement was signed by Abdullah Al Ahmar, assistant secretary-general of the SBSP, and IAF Secretary-General Ishaq Farhan.

The Syrian news agency said Dr. Farhan expressed support for Syria's demand for the return of the Golan Heights.

Reports circulating in Damascus suggested the visitors also pressed the Syrian government for

recognition of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria.

The Baath Party, which has ruled Syria since 1963, is a secular political group that advocates pan-Arabism and has consistently opposed religious parties.

On Monday, the London-based Al Hayat newspaper said the IAF was discussing with Syria the possibility of setting an Islamic party in Syria that would be affiliated with the Progressive National Front, an alliance of political parties led by the Baath.

It quoted Syrian Vice President Mohammad Zuhair Masharqa as saying the national front is "quite a flexible experience," suggesting the Syrian government might be ready to accept an Islamic party.

Last year Syria released scores of Brotherhood members from prison and allowed many of those living in exile to return home.

Dr. Farhan was quoted by Al Hayat as stressing that the IAF had no intention of interfering in any country's internal affairs but noted that "it is the right of the Islamists in any Arab country to exercise political action, and that the creation of an Islamic party in Syria would be in the national interest."

Dr. Farhan said he had put forth the idea in gener-

GCC ministers meet on ending Bahraini-Qatari war of words

RIYADH (AFP) — Gulf Arab foreign ministers met here Tuesday to urge Bahrain and Qatar to stop their war of words over disputed islands, sandbanks and reefs.

Ministers from Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates met with their counterparts from Bahrain and Qatar in a bid to defuse tension over the disputed Hawar islands and nearby territory, official Gulf sources said.

Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad Ben Jassem Ben Jabr Al Thani later held face-to-face talks with his Bahraini counterpart

Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa at Saudi Arabia's request, the official Qatari News Agency said.

No details were disclosed but an official from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a grouping of the six Gulf states, said earlier the four ministers would "try to get the Bahraini and Qatari ministers to stop hostile press campaigns."

"It is necessary to obtain a stop to the hostile campaigns to ... allow mediation efforts between the two countries to succeed," the GCC official said on condition he not be named.

In Doha, the Qatari newspaper Al Raya said its government was willing to forgive the "outrage" caused by Bahrain over their territorial dispute.

But the two sides have disagreed over the aims of Tuesday's meeting.

A Bahraini official said "all questions" would be debated including the dispute over the Hawar islands, while a Qatari official said the meeting would focus on "clearing up the air" rather than the dispute itself.

Qatar has been locked in

(Continued on page 7)



FOOD RATIONS: Iraqi officials distribute food rations on Tuesday after Iraq announced that there will be no change in the January rations handed out by the government at giveaway prices. Late last year Iraq resumed oil sales worth \$2 billion in six months as part of a U.N. deal to alleviate the suffering of its people (Reuters photo)

Hebron gunman reenacts shooting

HEBRON (Agencies) — Israeli soldier Noam Friedman returned to Hebron on Tuesday to reenact for police investigators his machine-gun attack on Palestinian shoppers in the West Bank town last week, witnesses said.

They said a shackled Friedman, 22, pointed an unloaded M-16 automatic rifle towards the "produce market" where the tight-wing religious gunman wounded seven in a New Year's Day shooting spree.

"I wanted to kill as many Arabs as possible," Friedman told Israeli radio. The reenactment, a standard Israeli police procedure, took place after two a.m. (midnight GMT) while residents of the volatile town slept.

"I pulled the trigger and from that moment I don't remember a thing, I heard shots, I tried to change the magazine but the soldier was already on top of me," Friedman, an off-duty soldier from a settlement near Jerusalem, was wrestled to the ground by other Israeli soldiers after he opened fire. He said he wanted to sabotage the pending handover of most of the West Bank town to Palestinian self-rule.

"Hebron is Jewish," Friedman told army radio.

UAE reports contacts over island dispute but decries Tehran's stand

AL-WATHBA, United Arab Emirates (R) — A top United Arab Emirates (UAE) official on Monday said the Gulf Arab state had made several contacts with Iran in a bid to resolve a territorial dispute, but condemned Tehran's "aggressive intentions."

"We have contacts now and then," Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan Ben Zayed Al Nahayan told Reuters.

He said Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati had made several visits to the UAE to discuss the row over three Gulf islands that are near key shipping lanes, but did not say when they had taken place.

"Velayati made several visits to the UAE. I don't have the exact date at the moment. Other (Iranian) officials (also) made visits to the UAE," he said.

A western source said Mr. Velayati had visited the UAE in recent weeks. The Iranian foreign minister's last official visit to the UAE was in 1993.

Iran's new ambassador to the UAE, Hossein Sadighi, said in November that Tehran was about to launch a new round of talks with the UAE to resolve the dispute.

Sheikh Sultan lashed out at Iran's buildup on the islands, saying it proved that the Islamic republic did not have peaceful intentions.

"Those kind of (moves) reflect had intentions and very aggressive intentions, to have built airports, (and have pursued a) defence and military buildup. It shows their ambitions are not peaceful," he said.

The UAE recently said Iran had deployed offensive weapons on the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

Asked if the UAE would adopt a different approach if Iran bolstered its presence on the islands, he said the country preferred exhausting all current initiatives before considering new options.

Last month, UAE President Sheikh Zaid Ben Sultan Al Nahayan called on Iran to respond to an appeal for a peaceful solution to the dispute. Tehran responded by reiterating its ownership of the islands.

Abu Dhabi and Tehran have been at loggerheads over the islands since 1992 when the UAE accused Iran of occupying them and revived its territorial claim after Iran tightened security measures at Abu Musa.

The UAE has urged Iran to take the row to the International Court of Justice. Iran says its sovereignty over the islands is not negotiable but has called for bilateral talks.

AOHR denounces execution of Libyans

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab Organisation of Human Rights (AOHR) on Tuesday condemned the execution of eight Libyans convicted of spying for the U.S. after "unfair trials."

"The AOHR denounces the execution of six Libyan officers and two civilians. Capital punishments were inflicted after unfair trials lacking any trace of justice," a statement by the group said.

"The injustice was manifested in many ways as trial hearings were held in secrecy, confessions were extracted under torture (in the absence of the right to defence and judiciary referral)," the Cairo-based AOHR said.

"These events took place ignoring the Libyan commitments to the international covenant of civil and political rights," it added.

The officers were shot to death and two civilians hanged Thursday after a Libyan court confirmed death sentences against them for allegedly acting on behalf of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

They had been arrested in 1994 for "spying and for membership in a banned political party."

The AOHR said the eight had been arrested along with others after a military mutiny in October 1993.

Farrakhan urges U.S. to accept Libyan offer to solve Pan Am case

TUNIS (Agencies) — U.S. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan said after a meeting with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi that Washington should accept initiatives for a solution to the case of an airliner allegedly sabotaged by Libyan agents.

The official Libyan news agency JANA said Mr. Farrakhan made his remarks about the case of the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am Jumbo jet that killed 270 people after he met Col. Qaddafi and before he left Tripoli on Monday night.

"Louis Farrakhan appealed to the American government to be responsive to the initiatives presented for a solution to the so-called Lockerbie issue," JANA said.

"The families of the victims need to know the truth of this tragedy as well as the suspected Libyan citizens," JANA, monitored in Tunis, quoted Mr. Farrakhan as saying.

Two Libyan agents have been indicted in the United States and Britain for planting a bomb that blew up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie in Scotland, killing all the 259 people on board and 11 people on the ground.

The United Nations has imposed sanctions on Libya for refusing to hand over the two men for trial in the United States or Britain. Libya says they could not get a fair trial in Britain or the United States.

London and Washington have repeatedly rejected offers by Libya for the men to be tried by a Scottish judge under Scottish law but at the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

JANA did not specify what initiatives Mr. Farrakhan was referring to.

The U.S. State Department on Monday urged Mr. Farrakhan, who arrived in Libya on Monday, to raise the Pan Am case with Col. Qaddafi.

JANA said the controversial black muslim leader would visit other countries to "denounce U.S. injustice against Muslim countries including the unjust sanctions imposed on Libya."

situation of blacks in America and the influence they would have during the next presidential election," it added.

He had told Tripoli previously that his Nation of Islam organisation "was ready to create a new political force in the United States to defend the plundered rights of the blacks and other minorities" and to play an effective role in U.S. politics.

Mr. Farrakhan joined Col. Qaddafi for prayers before leaving Tripoli.

JANA reported that Mr. Farrakhan said he was "very happy to visit Libya for the second time and to participate with it in the battle... against unfair measures which are imposed on this country."

Mr. Farrakhan, who has been accused of anti-Semitism in the United States, had received the 1996 "Qaddafi Prize for Human Rights," which comes with \$250,000, when he visited Tripoli in September.

The U.S. Treasury Department prohibited Mr. Farrakhan from receiving the money as well as another billion dollars allegedly promised to him by Col. Qaddafi.

Col. Qaddafi, however, denied promising Mr. Farrakhan a billion dollars and called for "Arab and Muslim countries to finance a lobby that would defend their causes" in the United States.

Mr. Farrakhan provoked controversy in the United States last year by visiting Cuba, Libya, Iran, Iraq and Sudan — countries Washington says support terrorism.

Zhirinovskiy begins Libya visit

Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is in Libya on a visit he said will bolster friendship and cooperation between the countries, Libyan radio reported Tuesday.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party in Russia's lower house of parliament, said he is renewing his country's "solidarity" with Libya against the "unjust" international sanctions.

The extreme-right wing Zhirinovskiy, who has endorsed dictatorial government and territorial expansionism as solutions for Russia's problems, last visited Libya in March 1995.

The itinerary for his current visit, which started Monday night, was not reported by Libyan radio, monitored in London.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bahrain sets up national guard

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain's emir, Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifa, on Tuesday announced the formation of a national guard aimed at bolstering security in the emirate. Bahrain's crown prince, Sheikh Hamad Ben Issa Al Khalifa, said last month that his country would form a national guard to "bolster security and stability" in the country. At least 26 people have been killed since anti-government unrest erupted in December 1994 with Shiite Muslim demands for a restoration of the parliament suspended by the Sunni Muslim-led government in 1975. Sheikh Issa set up the guard with a decree describing it as "a regular military force independent" of the armed forces. His son Mohammad Ben Issa Al Khalifa was given ministerial rank and named head of the force which is "tasked with protecting the nation's independence and security," said the decree carried by the official Gulf News Agency. The decree said Bahrain's head of state is the supreme commander of the national guard, but did not specify how the guard was different from the army and the other security services.

Musa aide to tour five African countries

CAIRO (AFP) — A senior Egyptian Foreign Ministry official will launch a five-nation tour of African countries next week to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region. Marwan Badr, an assistant to Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, said on Tuesday he will visit Uganda, Rwanda, Zaire, Kenya and Tanzania with messages from Mr. Musa to his African counterparts. Discussions will focus on developments in the Great Lakes region as well as bilateral ties and ways of reinforcing them. Mr. Badr said.

Egypt sends 20-physician delegation to Rwanda

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Health Minister Ismail Salam will lead a delegation of 20 prominent doctors to Rwanda on Wednesday to provide medical assistance to the strife-torn country, a foreign ministry official said Tuesday. The delegation will also be taking to Rwanda seven tonnes of medical equipment and medicine, said Marwan Badr. The delegation will provide humanitarian assistance as well as carry out surgery. Mr. Badr said, adding that the 20 doctors who will be part of the trip are among some of the country's most eminent physicians.

Death penalty sought in Beirut case

BEIRUT (AP) — An investigating magistrate on Monday demanded the death penalty for a Palestinian Muslim militant who has been accused of threatening Lebanon's security and attempting to incite civil strife. Magistrate Abdullah Bitar urged that Ahmed Abdul Karim Al Saadi and 12 of his followers be given death sentences. Saadi and two of the other defendants are still at large. No trial date has been set. Mr. Bitar accused the group of threatening internal security, illegally carrying arms and attempting several assassinations aimed at inciting civil strife. Authorities believe Saadi is hiding out in the sprawling 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Lebanese army troops in January 1996 surrounded the Palestinian camp in an effort to arrest Saadi, but backed off to avoid bloodshed at the camp. Saadi also is wanted by police in connection with the 1995 assassination of Sheikh Nizar Halaby, a prominent Muslim cleric whose Sunni Muslim faction was a rival of Saadi's Partisans' League.

2 militants killed in Egypt

BENI SUEIF (AFP) — Egyptian security forces killed two militants in a raid on their hideout in this province south of the Egyptian capital overnight, police sources said on Tuesday. The two militants were killed in an exchange of fire late Monday when the security forces raided their hideout in the village of Al Dawiya in Beni Sueif province, 125 kilometres south of Cairo, they said. Al Dawiya is considered the hometown of a large number of wanted militants in the province, the sources added. A total of 1,130 people have been killed since militants launched an anti-government campaign in March 1992.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05The Muppet Show
14:30Earth Revealed
16:00 Doc.Earth Revealed
16:30Escape from Jupiter
17:00News Flash
17:02Kelly and Challenges
18:00Ushuaia
19:00Le Journal
19:15Magazine — Sports
Et Musique
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy —
Baker's Field P.D.
20:15Challenges
21:10NBA Basketball
22:00News in English
22:25Bugs
23:15Han to Han
23:59 Comedy — Who's The Boss?

PRAYER TIMES

05:10Fajr
06:32Sunrise/Dhuhr
11:42Dhuhr
14:29Asr
16:52Maghrib
18:14Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweileh. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 653826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 827126.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457.

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 676491.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

ity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Ahmad Manna839759

Dr. Khalil Al Jbali740740

Dr. Waleed Al Masri675483

Dr. Yousef Rashid896301

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdows pharmacy890280

Al Asema pharmacy637055

Al Salam pharmacy656750

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy637660

Najrouk pharmacy626672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu281484

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Halaseh982799

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111

Civil Defence Department661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police 192631111

Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896590

Public Security Department630321

Hotel Complaints605800

Price Complaints661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority680100

Jordan Electricity Authority815615

Electric Power Company636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-55200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussien Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir,775111/26

Army, Marka891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)83323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

DRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) infor-

mation department at the

Queo Alia International Air-

port Tel: 108153200 where it

should always be verified.

Information on other flights

are supplied on phone 08

(52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:25Damascus (RJ)

07:35Lamaca (RJ)

08:35Jeddah (add) (RJ)

08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:25Toronto, Montreal (RJ)

17:45Madrid, Geneva (RJ)

18:05Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)

18:10London, Berlin (RJ)

18:25Paris, Rome (RJ)

20:45 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)

21:25Istanbul (RJ)

21:50Jakarta (add) (RJ)

22:50Frankfurt (add) (RJ)

23:59Cairo (RJ)

03:55 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

09:30Cairo (MS)

10:00Sanaa, Hudaidah (TY)

10:30Jeddah (SV)

12:35 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)

12:40Abu Dhabi (GF)

13:30Tunis (TU)

15:05Vienna (OS)

15:45Algiers (AF)

20:10Beirut (ME)

21:00Paris, Damascus (AF)

21:40Tel Aviv (LY)

22:20Lamaca (CY)

22:45Athens, Beirut (OA)

23:10Istanbul (TK)

23:15Amsterdam (KL)

01:55London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:20Aqaba (RW)

18:55Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES

08:00Jeddah (RJ)

09:45Rome, Frankfurt (RJ)

10:30Rome, Frankfurt (RJ)

10:40Berlin, London (RJ)

11:25Casablanca (RJ)

15:50Istanbul (RJ)

19:30Colombo (RJ)

20:00Bombay (RJ)

20:30New Delhi (RJ)

WS IN BRIEF

ts up national guard

APF) — Bahrain's emir, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad, on Tuesday announced the formation of a national guard to bolster security in the kingdom. The emir said last month that he was planning to form a national guard to "bolster security in the kingdom. At least 26 people have been killed in the country since the formation of the national guard. The emir said the national guard is a "regular military force" and is not a "special force". The emir said the national guard is a "regular military force" and is not a "special force".

to tour five African countries

— A senior Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amr Moussa, on Tuesday announced that he will lead a five-nation tour of African countries. The tour will include visits to Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Nigeria and Kenya. The tour is part of a series of visits to African countries by Egyptian officials.

20-physician delegation to Rwanda

— Egyptian Health Minister Ismail Haniyeh on Tuesday announced a delegation of 20 prominent doctors to Rwanda. The delegation will provide medical assistance to the Rwandan people. The delegation will also be providing medical assistance to the Rwandan people.

ly sought in Beirut case

— An investigating judge on Tuesday issued a warrant for the arrest of a man in Beirut. The man is suspected of being involved in a case. The man is suspected of being involved in a case.

killed in Egypt

APF) — Egyptian security forces on Tuesday killed a man in Egypt. The man was killed in a case. The man was killed in a case.

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Serbian opposition seeks to turn the screw on Milosevic

BELGRADE (AFP) — Serbian opposition leaders turned the screw Tuesday on embattled President Slobodan Milosevic by planning a campaign of civil disobedience against him and urging more external pressure from the West.

Following the success of a huge rally on the eve of Orthodox Christmas Monday, opposition forces threatening a variety of new acts of protest in a bid to force Mr. Milosevic's hand as their movement against the regime entered its eighth week.

And in a bid to drum up further international support for their cause, opposition leader Zoran Djindjic urged Western leaders to weigh in against Mr. Milosevic to force the beleaguered Serbian president to recognise opposition wins in local elections held last November.

"This is at the moment probably the only thing that can make him (Milosevic) move," Mr. Djindjic told Germany's Saarland Re-

gional Public Radio. The coalition of opposition parties and students, who have protested for 49 straight days against the regime's electoral manipulation, have vowed to step up their protests this week if Mr. Milosevic's regime does not accede to their demands.

On Monday, some 200,000 protesters packed central Belgrade in a thinly-veiled rally to celebrate Christmas Eve, despite a police ban on demonstrations in force since Dec. 25.

The rally marked the second time in two days that the opposition had circumvented the police ban. On Sunday, thousands of vehicles clogged central Belgrade in a traffic protest which opposition leaders have vowed could be repeated on a national scale, reducing Serbia to one large traffic jam.

As protesters were gathering for Monday's mass, a bomb exploded in another part of Belgrade outside the headquarters of the Yugo-

slav Left (JUL) Party, a junior member in Mr. Milosevic's ruling coalition.

Opposition forces have warned that a next step could involve them jamming government ministry phone lines by simply calling numbers and then leaving their phones off the hook.

They have also threatened to refuse to pay telephone bills and television licence fees if the dispute is not resolved this week.

Students meanwhile have threatened to face off with the riot police present on the streets of Belgrade in a bid to force them to withdraw.

The 30-day stand-off between regime and opposition was touched off when Mr. Milosevic's ruling Socialist Party annulled opposition victories in Nov. 17 municipal elections.

International mediators from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), urged the leadership to back down and reinstate the opposition wins in 14 Serbian cities

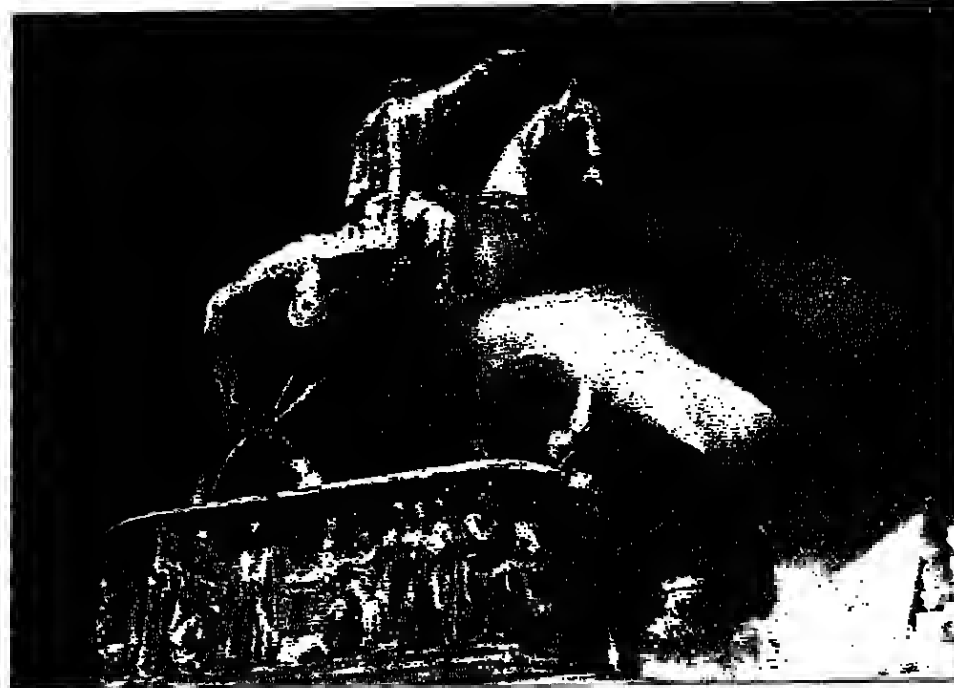
and towns after being invited to Belgrade by Mr. Milosevic.

The Orthodox Church has also backed the protesters, and on Tuesday the opposition received further support as senior university deans took their side against the government.

Deans of nine out of 24 faculties at Belgrade University sent a letter to Mr. Milosevic urging him to climb down.

Mr. Milosevic is left with a dwindling array of allies. With the army stressing its neutrality, the Serbian leader can now only really count on the television, which has mostly avoided reporting the protests, his wife Mira Markovic, and the police.

Riot police clashed with protesters late last month in violence which left one dead and more than 30 injured, according to the opposition, which has said it will sue Interior Minister Zoran Sokolovic for ordering the police into action.



An opposition supporter waves a huge Serbian flag atop a statue of the 19th century Serbian ruler Prince Mihailo Obrenovic during a Serbian Christmas demonstration organised by the opposition Zajedno (Together) Coalition in Belgrade centre Monday. Thousands of opposition supporters held a huge Christmas rally to demand a democratic Serbia (Reuters photo)

Thousands of Megawati supporters rally against Indonesian election body

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of supporters of Indonesian opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri staged rallies in several major cities Tuesday, including Jakarta, demanding the government accept her parliamentary candidates' list.

Almost 400 protesters, dressed in the red and black of the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI), stood outside the National Election Institute (LPU) building in Jakarta waving banners and shouting "loog live Megawati."

About 2,000 of her supporters rallied in front of the Provincial Electoral Board office in the East Java capital of Surabaya, while hundreds of others demonstrated at the local government office in Central Java's capital of Semarang, residents told AFP.

PDI official Haryanto Taslam told AFP here Tuesday evening that "similar rallies occurred in at least six other cities throughout Indonesia, including in the East Timorese capital of Dili."

Leaders of the Jakarta protest entered the building for talks with LPU officials while activists waited in the parking lot.

In June last year, Ms. Megawati was toppled as PDI leader by a government-backed party faction which installed Suryadi as new chairman.

A month later the LPU refused a parliamentary candidates' list submitted by Ms. Megawati and accepted Mr. Suryadi's. "If

Suryadi's parliamentary candidates' list is the one accepted for the (1997) general elections, this will cause a big problem amongst PDI members, a majority of whom do not recognise Suryadi," PDI Jakarta chairman Roy Janis said after talking with LPU officials.

Under Indonesian law, only candidates nominated by Indonesia's three official parties — the ruling Golkar Party, the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP), and PDI — are allowed to take part in the general elections, due to take place in 1997.

Mr. Janis handed the LPU a statement which demanded that Ms. Megawati's list be accepted, stating the elections would be flawed "if one of the contestants is not legal ... as embodied in the participation of PDI under Suryadi."

Mr. Janis said LPU officials did not give any comment and only received the statement.

"We are on the streets and risk being arrested because we believe that Megawati is our true leader. All we want is justice, nothing more," a Jakarta demonstrator told AFP.

Mr. Janis said the PDI Jakarta chapter has around 200,000 members, most of whom supported Ms. Megawati.

From the LPU the demonstrators went to the Jakarta governor's office to hand over the same statement to the governor, who heads the Regional Election Commit-

tee. They were received by officials and then dispersed peacefully.

Mr. Suryadi has proved to be unpopular with PDI masses and has faced numerous demonstrations on his visits throughout Indonesia, normally accompanied by a large contingent of security personnel.

Less than a month ago hundreds of Megawati supporters rallied at the parliament and then marched to Mr. Suryadi's house, demanding he be held responsible for mass riots in July, sparked by the party takeover.

It is estimated that five were killed in the unrest and more than 100 injured.

The December rally was the first time Megawati supporters had taken to the streets of Jakarta since the riots, which erupted after Suryadi supporters, backed by troops, violently occupied PDI headquarters.

Indonesian authorities have brought 124 Megawati supporters to trial for violence during the incident and sentenced most of them to just over four months for disobeying police orders to disperse. The defendants had already spent that long in prison pending trial.

However, one of Mr. Suryadi's supporters, who staged the assault on the party headquarters, have faced criminal charges.

PPP, PDI and Golkar will compete at the general elections in May 1997 for 425 seats in the parliament.

Golkar has won each of the five general elections held since 1971.

Hashimoto starts South East Asian tour

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (AFP) — Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto arrived Tuesday in Brunei to start a five-nation South East Asian tour with the protracted hostage crisis in Peru casting a shadow over the week-long mission.

Mr. Hashimoto was welcomed to the oil-rich sultanate's capital by the foreign minister, Prince Mohammad Bolkiah, prior to bilateral talks and a state banquet hosted by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, who is also the prime minister.

The talks centred on economic cooperation between Japan and Brunei, which exports most of its liquefied natural gas to Japan, diplomats said.

Japan is also exploring ways to help tiny Brunei diversify its oil-dependent economy and is keen to provide training for Bruneians, they added.

"We do not want to be simply known as an exporter of cars and television sets," a Japanese diplomat said, adding that Tokyo wanted more people-to-people relations with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

After an overnight stay in Brunei, Mr. Hashimoto was scheduled to fly on to Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore. He is to return home on Jan. 14.

Mr. Hashimoto went ahead with his mission to strengthen links with ASEAN, which also includes the Philippines and Thailand, despite the three-week-old hostage situation at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

"By going ahead with the planned ASEAN trip, I hope the international community will understand that Japan is a country that over yields to terrorism," said the Japanese leader, who was monitoring developments in Peru with an accompanying task force.

About half an hour before Mr. Hashimoto landed in Brunei, witnesses in Lima heard three gunshots near the besieged Japanese compound in the Peruvian capital.

It was not immediately clear whether the shots came from within the residence or from police outside, but an officer said it could have been an accidental firing.

The crisis erupted on Dec. 17 when rebels of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) stormed the sprawling residence. The left-wing rebels were still holding 74 people Tuesday after freeing some 580 captives.

Before setting out on his ASEAN tour, Mr. Hashimoto said that while Japan had "complete trust" in Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's government, "we will continue to do all we can and try our best to help secure the release of all those held hostage as early as possible."

"I hope all the hostages will be released at the earliest possible time to bring this incident to a peaceful conclusion," Mr. Hashimoto was quoted as saying by Kyodo News Agency.

In Jakarta, the Japanese ambassador, Taiso Watanabe, said Tuesday that Hashimoto was travelling with a task force that will keep him updated on the Lima crisis.

"The prime minister will take members of a task force to get the latest news about the hostage situation in Peru," he told journalists in the Indonesian capital. "He can also give the appropriate order as the situation develops."

Mr. Watanabe said that the task force is composed of about eight to 10 senior officials and experts, who have been working closely with the prime minister in Tokyo on the Peru situation.

"All throughout his stay, the prime minister will be in constant touch with Tokyo on the Lima affair," Mr. Watanabe said.

Seoul awaits action after North's apology

SEOUL (R) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Tuesday welcomed North Korea's apology over a submarine incursion but warned against false hopes for peace, demanding "action rather than words" by Pyongyang.

In a New Year's news conference, Mr. Kim urged the Communist North to abandon its bellicose stance against the South and join peace talks with South Korea, the United States and China.

Hours after he spoke, reports that a North Korean steel-hulled barge had been found washed ashore near the beach where the Shark-class submarine ran aground last September rattled nerves in Seoul.

Police said a notebook containing a message praising Pyongyang leader Kim Jong-il was found aboard the barge, but a Defence Ministry spokesman said the vessel was unlikely to have landed any infiltrators.

"We believe the boat drifted to the South. It doesn't look like an infiltration vessel," the spokesman said. "It appears to have been pushed South by heavy seas."

Another report, that a stricken North Korean vessel waving a white distress flag had been spotted in crashing seas off the east coast, was later denied by marine police.

A police spokesman said the South Korean resident who raised the alarm was mistaken, and the object at sea was a buoy.

Mr. Kim did not offer any new diplomatic initiatives in the news conference, which has often been used to unveil major policies.

"It is fortunate for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula that at the end of last year North Korea formally admitted and apologised for the incursion of a North Korean submarine into our waters and then pledged that no incursions will recur," he said.

"However, it is action, rather than words, that counts," Mr. Kim said.

Mr. Kim said the incursion showed North Korea had not abandoned its dream of unifying Korea under communism. The peninsula was divided at the end of World War II.

He stressed the need to boost defences against the North.

Mr. Kim said North Korea had agreed to attend a preparatory briefing this month on the peace talks jointly proposed by him and U.S. President Bill Clinton last year. U.S. and South Korean officials would hold the briefing.

"Within this month the three countries will meet for a briefing and we already have a promise from North Korea. But we don't know

the time or the place yet," Mr. Kim said.

The session is designed to pave the way for talks aimed at replacing a truce that ended the 1950-53 Korean War with a permanent peace mechanism.

The move is part of growing contacts between North Korea and the West after Pyongyang apologised for the submarine incident.

The submarine landed 26 armed agents on a Southern beach.

North Korea apologised on Dec. 29 and South Korea returned the bodies of 24 infiltrators shot dead during a manhunt.

One intruder was captured and another is still at large. On Monday, the U.S. Treasury said it had given a licence to giant grain company Garill to export 500,000 tonnes of grain to famine-struck North Korea.

Mr. Kim said that while North Korea struggled with internal problems any North-South summit to discuss Korean unification would be premature.

"The security situation on the Korean peninsula remains volatile and the instability of North Korea due to its increasing difficulties could threaten the peace," he said.

North Korea's energy shortage is so bad that three MiG fighters had crashed in the past month because of a lack of fuel, Mr. Kim said.

Kim stands by S. Korean labour bill

SEOUL (R) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Tuesday made clear he would not surrender to strikers and scrap a new labour law, angering unions that vowed to step up industrial action engulfing the economy.

State prosecutors, meanwhile, were poised to issue arrest warrants against militant union leaders who have defied orders to appear for questioning over nationwide strikes that have been declared illegal.

At a news conference, Mr. Kim insisted the new bill, which shatters near-total job security by allowing worker layoffs, would strengthen South Korea's sagging economy.

"It is not an evil law," he declared.

Unions had demanded Mr. Kim use his traditional New Year news conference to dump the bill.

Hours after Mr. Kim's uncompromising comments, the president of the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions said he would bring out public sector unions to join stoppages that have crippled shipbuilding yards and car plants.

"We have no choice but to intensify our strikes," Kwon Young-Kil told reporters.

Subway drivers and workers at state-owned telecommunications giant Korea Telecom would join industrial action, Mr. Kwon said. He did not give a timetable.

"Kim should have offered to talk over the issue," Mr. Kwon said.

"But there was no offer of talks, let alone an apology," Separately, a union statement said construction and office workers would walk out.

Prosecutors met to decide how to bring union leaders into custody and said a decision would be made by Wednesday.

Mr. Kwon and his lieutenants are camped out in a ramshackle tent in the shadow of Seoul's Myeongdong Cathedral, guarded by car workers with iron bars ready to resist any police assault on church property.

Hospital workers and unionists at four big broadcasters joined snowballing strikes intended to pressure the government into dropping the law.

The confederation said 217,000 workers were now idle, up from 190,000 Monday.

Strikers represent just a fraction of South Korea's workforce of more than 10 million.

Moscow said to thwart nuclear deal

WASHINGTON (R) — Moscow has held up for months efforts to transfer a cache of nuclear material out of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia and into a more secure facility in Russia, U.S. officials said Monday.

Although the Russian government, successor to the Soviet Union, has agreed to accept the nuclear material, officials there have raised bureaucratic, technical and financial issues that have held up a final deal, U.S. officials said.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told Reuters the issue would be high on the agenda when Vice-President Al Gore holds one of his regular meetings with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernenin, expected in February.

While the material could be used in nuclear weapons, the quantity involved is insufficient to make a nuclear weapon, Mr. Burns said.

But he acknowledged its acquisition by a country bent on building an atomic arsenal "would provide a significant start in stockpiling a quantity of weapons-grade material sufficient for a weapon."

As soon as Washington learned the nuclear material in Georgia existed, officials "began a priority effort to ensure that it did not fall

into the wrong hands," he said.

The United States has been working with Georgia and Russia since early last year to enhance the physical security over 9.5 lbs (4.3 kg) of highly enriched uranium stored at a research reactor near Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, and to arrange for its transfer to Russia for disposition, he said.

There is also 1.76 lbs (800 grammes) of spent highly enriched uranium fuel at the site that must be dealt with because it can also be refined into bomb ingredients.

Last May Washington upgraded security for the nuclear material by building a physical barrier to the storage location and installing video monitoring systems, sensors and alarms.

The New York Times, which reported on the thwarted deal in Sunday's editions, quoted Georgian officials as saying the material was virtually unguarded in the early 1990s when war engulfed the newly independent Caucasian nation.

The Soviet Union produced 1,300 tonnes of highly enriched uranium during the cold war and since its collapse, U.S., Russian and other Western officials have been increasingly concerned that poorly secured stockpiles could fall into the hands of countries like Iran

and Iraq, which have been accused of trying to acquire nuclear bombs.

Russia, as de facto successor to the Soviet Union, has accepted many of the former state's responsibilities, including caring for nuclear material from weapons scrapped under treaties with the United States and from reactors.

Mr. Burns said the United States believes "Russia is fully committed to removing all of the material from Georgia (but) there have been a number of complicated legal, technical and funding issues that have arisen which have to be resolved."

According to the New York Times, after agreeing to accept the Georgia-based highly enriched uranium, Russia raised new concerns that stalled the deal.

A major issue is cost. The United States agreed to pay Georgia for the commercial value of the uranium, expected to be about \$100,000. Also Russia has requested \$1 million to cover the expense of packing and transporting the material.

Mr. Burns said: "We have discussed with the Russians ways to advance funds (\$1 million) to Russia for this purpose, to be repaid through future deliveries of enriched uranium" for use in U.S. nuclear reactors under a previous agreement.

Jewish leader to decide on Swiss boycott in four weeks

TEL AVIV (R) — A Jewish leader said Tuesday he would decide in four weeks whether to call for a boycott against Swiss banks in response to a blackmail charge by a Swiss leader over World War II compensation for Jews.

Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg said he would not take part in a joint mission set up last May to search for dormant accounts in Swiss banks left by Jews killed by Nazis as long as Swiss members of the commission did not denounce the blackmail remark by Switzerland's Economic Minister Jean-Pascal Delamuraz.

"As for now, the partial boycott was suggested, economic disinvestment... and things like this were suggested to us," said Mr. Burg, laying out possible actions in response to the remark.

"We analyse each and every one of them. We'll come with our recommendation for action within four weeks," he told reporters after meeting to Jerusalem the Swiss ambassador to Israel.

Swiss banking officials and Jewish leaders agreed last May to hunt together for accounts of Holocaust victims but Mr. Delamuraz described as "extortion and blackmail" Jewish demands that Switzerland establish a \$250 million fund to compensate Jews.

He made the comments just before ending a one-year rotating term as his country's president.

The remark outraged Jewish leaders and prompted calls to boycott Swiss banks. Swiss stock market traders attributed a decline in Swiss bank shares Monday to talk of a Jewish boycott.

Meanwhile, a U.S. intelligence document released Monday said Switzerland, fearing that looted gold ingots it received from Nazi Germany could be seized for war damage settlements, had Germany stamp them as made before the start of World War II.

The document, a one-page May 20, 1946,

memorandum prepared by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner to the CIA, said when that policy failed to fool the allies, certain Swiss banks sold ingots made from looted gold to firms manufacturing foreign gold coins, particularly for South American countries.

The World Jewish Congress (WJC), which has been combing the U.S. National Archives to trace wartime Swiss bank dealings with the Nazis, released the document.

A WJC spokesman said the OSS memo sent to U.S. embassies across Europe was the first document found after months of bunting that directly accused the Swiss, rather than the Nazis, of originating the idea of disguising looted gold.

The Nazis looted millions of dollars worth of gold from the countries they occupied and used it to pay for supplies bought in countries like neutral Switzerland or to settle various accounts in neutral nations.

The document, titled "German gold in Switzerland," began with a statement on sourcing, saying, "the following report is based on information supplied by a banker who has been involved in many currency transactions with Switzerland."

The Swiss complained many documents being unearthed in the U.S. National Archives were based on hearsay or on material later proved false.

But last month the Swiss National Bank conceded it received looted Nazi gold during the war.

The latest document said French police reported a large increase in gold pesos circulating in the Bordeaux area in April 1946 and added, "source comments that this item was supplied by the French police."

The document added that the channelling of these funds was "reportedly done in cooperation" with the head of Swiss intelligence at the time, Col. Roger Masson. The document gave no sourcing for this assertion.

Hashimoto starts South Asian tour

BANDAR SEREY WANG (AFP) — Prime Minister Hashimoto arrived in Bandar Serey WANG on Friday to begin a five-day tour of South Asia. The tour will include visits to Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Hashimoto is expected to meet with leaders of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and discuss regional cooperation and economic development.

The tour is part of Japan's efforts to strengthen its ties with South Asian countries and promote regional stability. Hashimoto will also discuss the recent floods in California and the impact of climate change on the region.

Hashimoto's visit is the first by a Japanese prime minister to South Asia since 1992. He will be accompanied by a high-level Japanese delegation, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Hashimoto is expected to leave South Asia on Monday and return to Japan. He will be in Cambodia for two days, Laos for two days, and Thailand for one day.

Hashimoto's tour is part of a larger initiative by Japan to promote regional cooperation and economic development in South Asia. Japan has been providing significant aid to South Asian countries in recent years.

Hashimoto's visit is also seen as a signal of Japan's growing influence in the region. Japan has been working to establish itself as a major power in Asia and the Pacific.

Hashimoto's tour is expected to be successful in strengthening Japan's ties with South Asian countries and promoting regional stability.

Hashimoto's visit is a testament to Japan's commitment to regional cooperation and economic development.

Hashimoto's tour is a key part of Japan's foreign policy strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Hashimoto's visit is a significant event in the region's history.

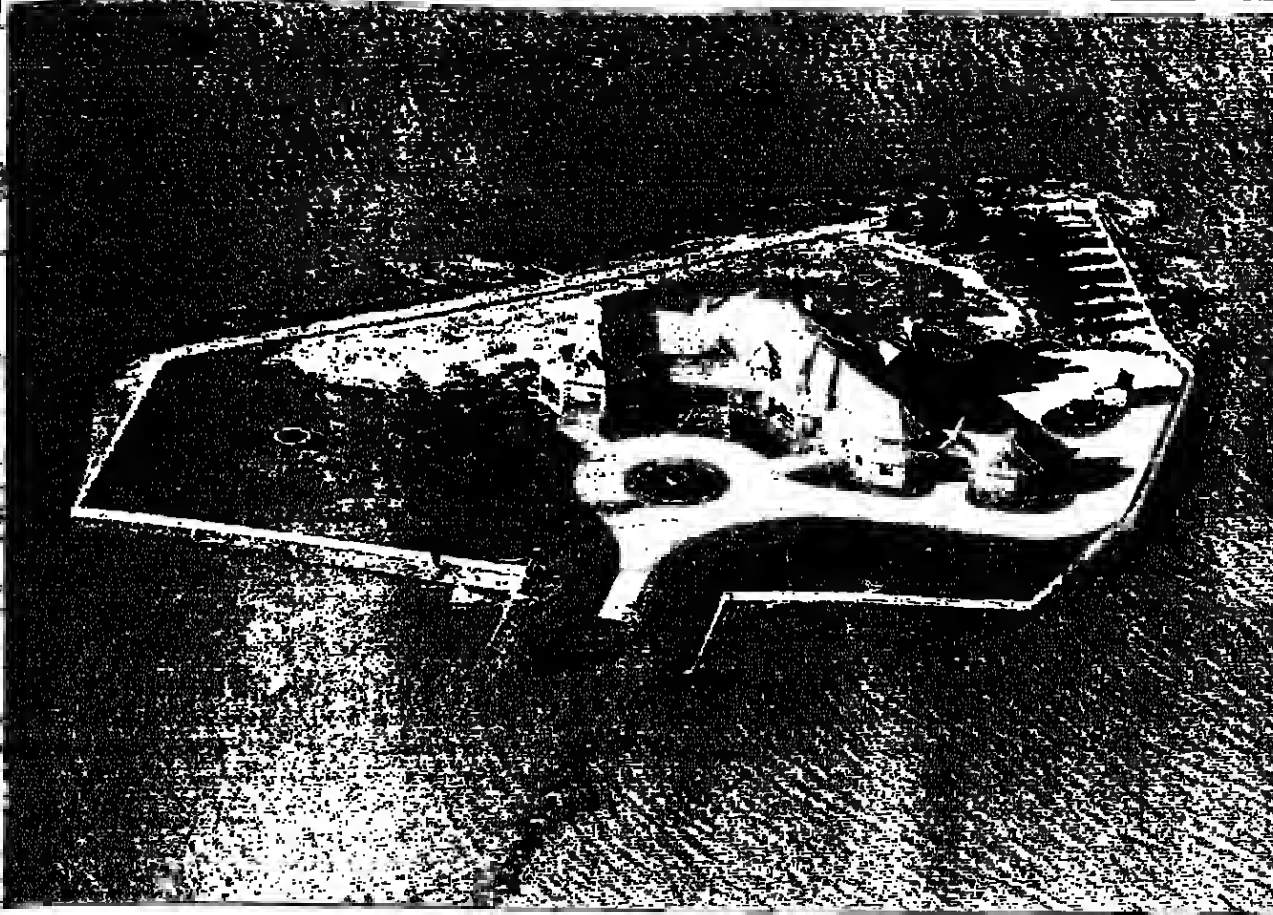
Hashimoto's tour is a landmark event for Japan's relations with South Asia.

Hashimoto's visit is a major step forward for regional cooperation.

Hashimoto's tour is a historic moment for the region.

Hashimoto's visit is a testament to the strength of Japan's ties with South Asia.

Hashimoto's tour is a key part of Japan's foreign policy strategy.



A large home near Modesto in the California Central Valley is surrounded by water from the San Joaquin River, turning the home into an island Monday. Flooding caused by winter storms and snow melt continue throughout the valley. Gov. Pete Wilson has declared a state of emergency in 41 of the state's 50 counties (Reuters photo)

California floods among costliest in state's history

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — California's new year floods are among the costliest in the state's history, with the initial bill for storm damage in just nine counties estimated at \$775 million, officials said Monday.

The state's first official estimate of flood damage was issued as several parts of California were still under water, making it too early to estimate damage, and as officials kept a close watch on fragile levees.

The California Office of Emergency Services (OES) said losses totalled \$775 million in the nine California counties and one city that had reported initial damage figures from 10 days of storms and floods.

That is less than a quarter of the 41 counties where a state of emergency has been declared by California Gov. Pete Wilson.

Wilsoo. Many of the central valley counties hardest hit by the floods have yet to report and OES spokesman Steve Martarano said the total "definitely will rise."

Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington have also suffered widespread damage from floods and landslides and at least 20 people have been killed in the region.

California's initial losses already surpass dollar damage figures from severe floods in 1955 and 1986. The winter storms of 1995, California's most damaging flood disaster in history, caused \$1.8 billion in damages. Asked whether the latest floods could eventually beat that figure, Mr. Martarano said: "Draw your own conclusions from the scope of this."

President Bill Clinton has declared a major disaster in parts of California as well as parts of Nevada and Idaho.

James Lee Witt, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, toured flood-ravaged areas of California Monday.

The initial damage reports were filed by nine northern California counties and the city of Morgan Hill, 70 kilometres south of San Francisco. In those areas, 552 homes, 59 mobile homes and 23 businesses were destroyed or suffered major damage and another 1,095 homes, 97 mobile homes and 121 businesses suffered minor damage.

Total damage to homes and businesses in the areas reporting was \$242 million, the OES said. Total public property costs, including

damage to infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, and government buildings, totalled \$525 million, it said. The remaining \$8 million consisted of costs incurred by federal programmes.

Weather was fine in northern California and rivers were receding in some areas. Tens of thousands of evacuees were allowed to return to their homes in Yuba City and Marysville near Sacramento at the weekend and only about 3,800 people remained in 25 shelters, the OES said.

But hundreds of homes and thousands of acres of farmland remained submerged in Yuba and Sutter counties north of Sacramento and in the Modesto area in the state's fertile central valley.

Europe's big freeze lets up

PARIS (AFP) — freezing temperatures eased Tuesday in much of northern Europe, but foul weather continued to take its toll in France and Germany.

Paris woke up to a forecast high of minus two degrees Celsius (28 degrees Fahrenheit), while freezing levels were expected in Germany, Switzerland and the Nordic countries.

Thermometers in London danced around the freezing point, while Italy and Spain were milder — at the cost of overcast skies, rain and in places snow.

Some 260 people are reported to have died as a result of the cold snap that embraced much of the continent for the past two weeks — and the toll continued to rise Tuesday.

In Kahla, eastern Germany, a man of 58 was found dead in an unheated house, police said, bringing cold-related deaths in Germany so far this winter to around

50.

In the southeastern French department of Drome, a 41-year-old psychiatric patient was found dead from the cold under a bridge over the Rhone River.

She had last been seen alive at her family home during Christmas, and it appeared that she had been dead for two days, police said.

Her death brought the French cold-linked death tally to 26 since Christmas Eve.

In Spain, a train running between Madrid and the northern city of Gijon jumped its tracks Tuesday as it came out of a tunnel and slammed into snow left by an avalanche in the Pajares Pass.

No one was hurt as the 56 passengers were transferred to another train, local officials said.

Spaniards Tuesday appeared to have heeded advice from the authorities by

postponing their return home from Christmas and New Year's holidays.

They were supposed to have gone back Monday, but snow in the north and centre and rain in the south made travel on many roads dangerous.

In Essen, western Germany, burst water pipes deprived 60,000 families of heating overnight Monday, while a homeowner in Freilassing who tried to start a fire to warm up the premises ended up by burning the house down.

Hard luck also fell on five handis who stole a getaway car got stuck in snow after a hold-up on a super-market in Wallhalben, western Germany, police said.

French railways, with their TGV bullet trains, were virtually back to normal, after ice on electricity cables wreaked havoc on travellers' schedules over the weekend.

Japan fisheries fear disaster as oil slicks coats beaches

MIKUNI, Japan (R) — Fishing villages in northwest Japan braced for economic and environmental catastrophe Tuesday as oil from a sunken Russian tanker coated beaches and threatened prized shellfish beds.

Oil slicks had so far hit shore across a 100-kilometre area stretching from Kyoto prefecture to Fukui prefecture, whose rocky coast is dotted with fish farms, fishing ports and tourist resorts, a Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) spokesman said.

"Oil has come ashore at more than seven places from Kyogamisaki in Kyoto to Oshima Lighthouse in Fukui prefecture, where the bow of the tanker has drifted ashore," the MSA spokesman told Reuters.

A 10-kilometre wide oil slick broke up overnight into many smaller patches in rough seas and the first oil reached a beach at Mikuni, about 330 kilometres north-

west of Tokyo, at mid-morning Tuesday, the spokesman said.

"A 300-metre stretch of coast at Oshima has been covered with a layer of oil," Mikuni Town Council official Kazuya Tada told Reuters.

The oil slicks also threaten a stretch of rocky sea of Japan coastline on the picturesque Noto Peninsula, immediately east of Fukui. The popular summer tourist area is famed for shrimp, crabs and women divers known as "Ama."

Television showed dejected-looking Ama staring out at the choppy seas off the coast where they make their living diving for shellfish and rare seaweed without the aid of air tanks or snorkels.

Fishermen and fisheries officials predicted the slick would spell disaster for this year's harvest of abalone and turbine shell, both shellfish delicacies, and seaweed.

"Even this amount of oil

will mean this year's crop will be wiped out," a fisherman said.

Kenji Ondo of the Fukui Prefectural Fisheries Organisation said he feared great long-term danger to the local industry.

"If the oil reaches rocky parts of the coast, the ecosystems could be seriously damaged. If it enters the food chain via the seaweed it could slow down the growth of organisms all the way up the chain," he said.

Intermittent snow and cold have dogged efforts to stop the oil spill — or even confirm its size — since the Russian-registered Nakhodka sank and broke in two during storms in the Sea of Japan last Thursday.

The spill, already described as Japan's second-biggest, grew worse Monday when oil started seeping from ruptured tanks in the stern of the vessel, where most of the ship's heavy fuel oil was stored.

Soldier killed in Nigerian bomb blast

LAGOS (AFP) — At least one soldier was killed and 15 others were seriously wounded in a bomb attack in Lagos Tuesday, the third such assault in three weeks, witnesses said.

The bomb went off at 7:15 a.m. (0615 GMT) as a Nigerian army bus carrying about 60 soldiers to duty drove through Surulere neighbourhood in the centre of the city, near Ojuelegba Military Base.

Lieutenant-Colonel U.M. Bobai told AFP that at least one person died in the blast and 15 were seriously wounded. The victim, who was not identified, was sitting near a window of the Mercedes Benz bus when the bomb went off.

The injured were taken to a nearby military hospital, Col. Bobai said.

The blood-spattered interior of the bus was littered with body parts, an AFP correspondent observed. All its windows were shattered, part of its left side and sections of roof were ripped off by the force of the blast.

The attack occurred outside the entrance to the headquarters of the Nigerian Army Ordnance Corps Barracks and school at Abalti in Surulere.

Witnesses said the bomb appeared to have been planted by the roadside near a road that passes over Ojuelegba bus stop and to have been detonated by remote control.

Soldiers and police searching the scene found pieces of iron and wood embedded in the ground.

On Dec. 16 the convoy of Lagos state military administrator, Colonel Mohammed Marwa, was targeted and on Dec. 18 a bus carrying soldiers to duty was attacked. A total of 19 people were seriously wounded in the two incidents.

Former French troops recruit mercenaries for Zaire — report

PARIS (AFP) — Former French soldiers were reported Tuesday to be recruiting mercenaries for Zairean government forces fighting mainly Tutsi rebels in the east of the country.

The prestigious Le Monde daily said the group, including the former head of security for late French President Francois Mitterrand, was already some 200-300 strong, and more would join in the following weeks.

It said the mercenaries came from Europe — including Belgium, Britain and France — as well as Angola, Mozambique and South Africa.

The French Defence Ministry immediately denied any official involvement by France in the affair.

"Even if some were former French soldiers, of course we would have no control over them, and one could in no way infer that there is a link with French policy in the region," a spokesman said.

Le Monde said Alain Le Carro, ex-head of the GSPR presidential security cell, and another former gendarme linked to it, was recruiting mercenaries to help Kinshasa oust rebels who have occupied eastern Zaire since the end of October.

On Monday, Paris was forced to deny claims by rebel head Laurent-Désiré Kabila that French troops were seen in the northeastern town of Kisangani.

Mr. Kabila said 1,000 French soldiers as well as South African and Angolan mercenaries were currently in Kisangani, a strategic town that would be a key base for the counter-offensive promised by Zaire.

The Le Monde report said around 10 former French soldiers were already in place in the region, along with the 200-300 soldiers dubbed the "white legion" by their members, to train Kinshasa's forces.

"Their numbers are due to increase in coming days," the report added.

It said the mercenaries were recruited from various networks, including one used by Bob Deo, the notorious French former mercenary who staged a failed coup in the Comoros Islands in September 1995.

Others were hired with the help of a South African company, Executive Outcomes, which Le Monde quoted deoyog all involvement.

The report said the firm ostensibly deals in "industrial security."

Mr. Kabila, speaking to AFP Monday, also named Executive Outcomes as a source of mercenaries in Watsa, near Kisangani, and said there were some 2,000 mercenaries

ies from the former Angolan rebel movement UNITA.

Le Monde said its report was based on people who had worked with the former French soldiers in the past.

The mercenaries were recruited to train the Zairean Armed Forces, which declared last week that they were ready for a "lightning" counter-offensive against the rebels.

As well as Le Carro, reportedly now a security advisor to Ivory Coast President Konan Bedie, Le Monde named Robert Montoya, a former gendarme also involved in the Elysee's anti-terrorist cell, as a key figure in the affair.

It said Mr. Montoya was responsible for liaising with Executive Outcomes.

The French Foreign Ministry said it was "not aware of the presence of mercenaries in the region" and "anyway, if the information were confirmed, it would have nothing to do with French policy in the region."

Paris "supports the dialogue between the countries in the region, notably in relation to the Great Lakes conference," a spokesman said, referring to talks aimed at resolving the refugee crisis in the region.

President Jacques Chirac's Elysee Palace also denied any official French involvement, saying that if proved true such mercenary activities were to be deplored.

"Such activities have no link with France's policy, and could only be condemned in the clearest terms," said a spokeswoman.

Meanwhile, Zairean rebels ordered Tuesday the arrest of leaders of the Mai-Mai village warriors who until last month were their allies in the fight to overthrow President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Star Radio, the mouthpiece of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADF), said the decision had been taken because of the trouble the Mai-Mai had caused in one of their home regions north of Goma — one of several towns in eastern Zaire held by the rebels.

"What the troublemakers are doing is not acceptable and must be stopped," the radio said.

At least 33 people, including 20 Mai-Mai, have been killed in the past week as warriors emerged from their villages in forested hills to attack alliance soldiers at Butembo, 180 kilometres north of Goma.

No casualty figures are known from other outbreaks of fighting near Rwindi 100 kilometres north of Goma and around Bunia, in a gold mining region 360 kilometres to the north.

Yeltsin stays in bed with cold, under treatment

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, who is suffering from a cold, was under doctors' orders to take things easy Tuesday and spend plenty of time in bed at his country residence near Moscow, a Kremlin spokesman said.

"The president will spend today at his residence at Gorky-9, most probably with his family," he told Reuters. "He will be partially confined to bed."

The spokesman said Mr. Yeltsin, who Monday cancelled meetings for the next few days, was following an "intensive course of treatment"

but could give no details of his illness or what medication he was taking. He added, however, that doctors saw no need for Mr. Yeltsin to go into hospital.

Mr. Yeltsin's Press Secretary Sergei Yastrzhembsky said Monday the president had a heavy cold and a temperature but that the illness had no relation to the 65-year-old Kremlin leader's recent heart bypass surgery.

Mr. Yeltsin had a quintuple heart bypass operation on Nov. 5 and returned to work at the end of last year.

Veteran Texan heart surgeon Michael DeBakey, who advised on the operation, told Reuters Monday Mr. Yeltsin's heart was all but back to normal and should not pose any special problems.

"Based on the reports I'm getting, it would appear his cardiac function has been virtually restored to normal," Dr. DeBakey said. Mr. Yeltsin's recovery "was right on schedule" and the surgery would not leave him susceptible to infections such as a cold.

"It should make him more resistant," Dr. DeBakey said.

He added the cold was

"transient and self-limited" but doctors would keep an eye on it. "Any cold should be taken seriously because it can develop into other things," he said.

Dr. DeBakey said he did not think the president's return to work had contributed to his catching cold. "He promised me he would be a good patient and I think he has been," said Dr. DeBakey, 88.

He said he would likely visit Mr. Yeltsin again in the spring when he was to attend a medical meeting in Russia.

Russia marks Christmas as Orthodox faith revives

MOSCOW (R) — Millions of Russians attended Christmas mass Tuesday, celebrating Orthodox rites that are flourishing despite years of official atheism.

President Boris Yeltsin, an ex-Communist who has encouraged the revival of the thousand-year-old state church, is not due to attend public services after catching a "heavy cold" Monday.

In a statement Monday, Mr. Yeltsin praised the church for affirming the "high ideals of spirituality and the achievement of unity and concord among the peoples of the Russian state."

He will conduct afternoon mass at the newly rebuilt Christ the Saviour Cathedral, near the Kremlin, which has risen dramatically in just two years on the site of an ideological 19th century predecessor blown up on Stalin's orders in 1931.

The massive church, which should be completed this year, is a concrete testament to the resurrection of the secular calendar in line

with the West but the Orthodox Church continues to use the old calendar, on which Christmas falls 13 days later than for Western creeds.

In a Christmas Eve address, Patriarch Alexy II appealed to the Kremlin to remember the tens of millions of Russia's poor and to tackle the problem of unpaid wages and pensions.

"We urge the leadership of the country to recognise the urgent need for resolution of this problem," he said.

Neglected churches across the country have benefited from the donations of some of Russia's new rich minority.

But there has been criticism of the millions of dollars spent on rebuilding Christ the Saviour, albeit private money, when much of the nation is on the headline. The white-bearded patriarch decried the

growing gap between rich and poor.

"At all times the church has been and remains on the side of the weak and the unfortunate," he said.

As in tsarist and Soviet times, however, the church is closely tied to the state. Secular leaders, including the now fiercely nationalistic Communist Party, have sought to exploit the church's authority to bolster their own legitimacy.

This new state Orthodoxy has worried some of the substantial Muslim minority and heightened calls for autonomy in predominantly Muslim provinces. Demands for an Islamic republic were one factor in the recently ended war in Chechnya.

Buddhism is also an officially recognised religion in parts of Siberia and the Far East. Many Jews, oppressed for centuries by tsars and Communists alike, continue to emigrate to Israel.

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Major goes for stability over bold reform

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister John Major said Tuesday he was aiming for stability rather than bold reforms at the start of election year for his unpopular conservative government.

Trumpeting what he called "sparkling" economic prospects after a lengthy recession, Major shrugged off suggestions that his government lacked big new ideas after 17 years in power.

"New thinking is very fashionable for political commentators but stability is what most people in the country would like to see — stability so they can get on with their own lives in security, and meet their own ambitions," Mr. Major

told BBC Radio in an interview.

"I don't think change for its own sake is at all an attractive proposition in terms of running the country," he added.

Mr. Major said a future Conservative government would make improvements in health and education a priority after the elections, which must be held by May 22.

But he added "we have made most of the major reforms."

Mr. Major was speaking ahead of the first of a series of news conferences later Tuesday (eds:1130 GMT) that are intended to imitate the winning strategy of U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The Conservatives, who have won four suc-

cessive elections, are some 20 points behind a revamped Labour Party in the opinion polls.

The Conservatives are portraying Labour as a "leap in the dark" for Britons, saying they represent a dangerous unknown and would be reckless with the economy.

"We now have the best economy of any country in Western Europe, not just this year, but next year and the year after that. Can people see that? They can. Will they want to throw it away? They will not," Mr. Major said.

Labour and the small opposition Liberal Democrats are discussing sweeping changes to Britain's constitution, including a bill of rights, parliaments for Scotland and Wales and possibly even the adoption of proportional representation.

Mr. Major said he was not opposed to constitutional change in principle but said some reforms — like a change to proportional representation — would have major disadvantages.

"What is the purpose of spending most of the next parliament on those sort of changes when we have the opportunity to make improvements in education, in health, to the things that really matter to people," Mr. Major said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab newspaper published in Jordan by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

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Jordan Press Foundation,
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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Not an easy task

THE HOLDING of the conference for Arab businesspeople in Amman Monday to bolster trade among the Arab countries acquires an added sense of urgency when viewed against the alarming fact that only eight per cent of all the Arab Worlds' trade is exchanged among the Arab states. We may have to thank Israel and the challenges that its gigantic economy and industry pose to the Arab World for spurring the business community into action. Peace in the region brought with it both promises and dangers to Arab economies. There is no doubt that comprehensive peace in the area provides Israel with the opportunity to penetrate the Arab markets with its advanced technology and industry. The less-developed Arab World, therefore, needs to get its act together to meet the challenges posed not only from Israel but from other economic giants in the world.

Unlike all previous efforts by the Arab World to accomplish economic integration, the Amman meeting is essentially an effort on the private sector level to attain what Arab governments have repeatedly failed to accomplish. The best evidence of failed government action to forge an Arab market is the bankruptcy of the existing Arab Council for Economic Unity due to the lack of support from the Arab capitals. Now it is the business community's turn to fill the vacuum by taking charge of economic activity and making daring efforts to create a common market that would equitably service the commercial needs of each and every Arab country, small or big, rich or poor.

In his keynote address to the opening session of the Amman conference, His Majesty King Hussein called on the participants to attain what their governments have failed to achieve by overcoming the obstacles created by state bureaucracy and bureaucrats. The task is many-fold. Not only do businesspeople have to battle bureaucracy and state control within their own countries. They have to overcome the obstacles created by decades of Arab-Arab hostility and political bickering. For inter-Arab trade to pick-up and reach the required volumes, border procedures must be relaxed and made easier and speedier. Political rivalry between Arab states must not hinder economic integration. Unfortunately this matter is beyond the reach of businesspeople. It requires decisions at the highest levels, not less than the level of an Arab summit, to free trade from the constraints of inter-Arab politics.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT IS still not late for the government to take a sensible action and stop the Israeli trade exhibition which is due to open today, said a writer for Al Ra'i Tuesday. If the government refrains from banning the exhibition, although it has the power to do so, in order to end the controversy and prevent any consequences, it must allow those staging a sit-in near the exhibition site to express their feelings and display their strong reaction to such an event which is considered by the majority of the people as offending the Jordanians, the Palestinians and the Arab Nation at large, said Ahmad Misch. There is no tangible gain for Jordan from organising the exhibition on its territory and there will be no embarrassment or loss for the concerned authorities if they decide to ban it in order to avert disturbances either, said the writer. It must be noted that the Arab businesspeople who are holding a meeting in Amman have been unanimous in blaming Israel's practices and aggressive policies for the economic stagnation prevailing in the whole Arab region, said the writer. Should the government decide to ban the exhibition, he said, it would be sending a clear message to the Israeli government that it should give up its present policies and return to the path of peace.

A WRITER for Al Dustur criticised the wealthy communities of the Arab states who keep their wealth away from their nations and deposit their funds in foreign banks and called on them to utilise their capital in the development of the Arab World. Taher Adwan said that perhaps the rich keep their wealth abroad under the pretext that the Middle East lacks stability or security, but they should take a lesson from the Jewish community around the world which has been supplying huge funds to the Jews in Israel to help the Jewish state achieve prosperity, regardless of the turbulence in this region over the past decades as well as the current difficult political situation. The writer said that recent statistics showed that Arab businesspeople possess \$650 billion in foreign banks while their countrymen face poverty, unemployment and many other social and economic ills. He said that the Arab businessmen who are holding meetings in Amman should remember that only through the efforts of the private sector, and not the governments of the advanced nations, did the industrialised nations achieve progress and prosperity.

Arabs fear Israeli hold on Clinton's new team

By John Carlin

WASHINGTON — High among President Bill Clinton's New Year resolutions will be to do all in his power to forge a lasting peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. However, two recent appointments he has made to top jobs in his administration have only made the challenge more daunting.

Madeleine Albright, the president's designated Secretary of State, and Rahm Emanuel, who replaces George Stephanopoulos as senior White House adviser, will only encourage the perception of the Palestinians and the Arab World that America cannot be trusted to play honest broker in the Middle Eastern conflict.

Given the huge distrust that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu generates among Arabs, America's mediating role

as negotiations evolve beyond the Hebron deal towards "final status" talks will become more critical than ever.

President Clinton will be seeking to press home the advantage by helping Israel rebuild bridges with its Arab neighbours, notably Egypt and Jordan. He would also like to add Syria to the peace equation.

The prospects of Ms. Albright faring any better than the outgoing Warren Christopher at persuading Syria to do business with Mr. Netanyahu are not good. It is not only a question of style, although temperamentally Ms. Albright is to Mr. Christopher as Lady Thatcher was to Sir Geoffrey Howe. More to the point, Ms. Albright's record as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations offered evidence once more of America's special relationship with Israel.

Mr. Emanuel remains for

now a relatively unknown quantity. But as his fame spreads, the news will also reach the Arab World that the middle name of President Clinton's new eminence grise is Israel.

Rahm Emanuel's father fought with the Israeli underground in the war for Israeli nationhood. Mr. Emanuel senior named his three sons after Israeli heroes who died in that war. The Emanuel family was brought up in Chicago but, summer holidays were always spent in the Jewish homeland. Rahm Emanuel was born in the U.S. but kept Israeli dual citizenship until he was 18. During the Gulf war he displayed his allegiance to the land of his father when he volunteered to serve in the Israeli army. He spent two-and-a-half weeks at a military base near the Lebanese border.

It was events at the Lebanese border eight months ago which revealed

to Arab leaders the extent of Ms. Albright's commitment to the Israeli cause. She argued vehemently against a U.N. decision to publish a human rights report heavily critical of the Israeli artillery bombardment of Cana, in southern Lebanon, which killed more than 100 Palestinian refugees. Ms. Albright said publication of the report would damage American peace efforts.

Boutros Ghali said in an interview in November that colleagues at the U.N. had warned him at the time that his decision to overrule Ms. Albright's request not to publish the report would cost him his job as U.N. Secretary-General.

In an article published in the Jan. 1 New York Times, Mr. Ghali said Ms. Albright was well aware of the difficulties she would encounter in persuading the Arab World of her "bona fides."

Mr. Ghali was at a dinner two weeks ago attended by Ms. Albright. It was a tense encounter, for only days earlier she had succeeded in her crusade to dash his hopes for a second term as secretary-general. "What went wrong?" He asked her. "Why this campaign against me for six months?"

According to Mr. Ghali, she fobbed him off an "official interpretation" and then proceeded to ask him for help in the new challenges she would face after her promotion to Secretary of State.

"She asked me to help her in relations with the Arabs," said Mr. Ghali, an Egyptian veteran of Middle Eastern diplomacy. "She made the point that she knew because she was against my reelection that the Arab World was not happy."

The Independent

IT OCCURRED TO ME ...
Con-tractual business

By Ali Kassab

JUST OVER a year ago Amman put all systems in high gear and devoted all its resources to making a success of the MENA conference, which was intended to attract foreign investment to our country and put us on the path to prosperity. Since then most analysts seem to agree, with typical Jordanian politeness, that the conference was an outstanding success, except that it failed to achieve any of its objectives. Far from attracting foreign investment, Jordan appears to have succeeded in chasing away Jordanian investment that was already in the country.

At the time, I was motivated to attempt a humble contribution to this worthy effort, by devoting this column to giving advice to the unwitting foreign investor, to guide him around the labyrinth of Jordanian business practice. The great failing of that series of columns is that they overlooked the most important issue in business, contractual relationships.

You see, Jordanians, in their unmatched perspicacity, boil things down to basics. They realise that business is a process in which one tries to gain the maximum and, in this quest, they do not allow trivial formalities such as a contract to get in the way. Therefore, contract negotiations tend to be a formality in which one agrees to whatever is said, in order to get the job started. The serious work begins when the job is completed, and payment is claimed. This is when the payer starts having important lengthy meetings and trips abroad that stop him from receiving or returning the calls of the payee.

This is essential for the smooth conduct of business. You see, if the Party of the Second Part received all that is due to him, he would go away. Better to keep him around, claiming his money, because you never know when you might need him again. By short changing him, you ensure that he is always available to do other jobs, in the hope of receiving payment for the first job.

As for the Party of the Second Part, he is no fool either. He realises that the Party of the First Part is going to fleece him, so he takes his precautions. Generally, there are two courses of action open to him: the first is to work the loss into the agreement, so that he would receive all what his work is worth in down-payments and expenses, and when he is fleeced of the final payment, it would not be a loss. The other course of action is to give an incomplete job so that the amount of which the payer fleeces him is proportionate to the amount of work not completed or delivered.

Which reminds me of the words of Aristotle Onassis who once said an oral contract is not worth the paper on which it is written. It is clear that Mr. Onassis had never attempted to do business in Jordan because, had he enriched his life with this experience, he would have realised that a written contract can also be not worth the paper on which it is written.

Jews and the burden of history

By Gwynne Dyer

"ABRAHAM BOUGHT the Cave of the Patriarchs for 400 shekels of silver," said Noam Friedman, a 22-year-old fanatic sinking under the burden of 4,000 years of Jewish history, hours after he sprayed Palestinian civilians with gunfire in the town of Hebron. "No one will return it."

Friedman's purpose in opening fire in the middle of Hebron was to commit a massacre that would ignite widespread Palestinian rioting and abort an Israeli-Palestinian deal returning most of the city to Palestinian rule. He is a dangerous lunatic, of course. But the problem — for Palestinians, and above all for Jews themselves — is that Friedman is right about the history. Abraham did buy the Cave of Patriarchs.

Abraham was a real person. He left the city of Ur around 4,000 years ago — estimates vary from 2100 BC to as late as 1800 BC — to travel first to the city of Haran and then to the land then known as Canaan.

Lord knows where the land Abraham bought actually was, but it may have been around Hebron: ancient traditions are often quite accurate about such

things. The ancestors of today's Jews certainly lived in the area until famine drove them into Egypt three thousand and three hundred years ago. And by 1200 BC, thanks to Moses, they were back in what is now Palestine, and remained the dominant population there for the next thousand years.

The Jews are not the oldest of the world's peoples. Ur, the world's first city, was already 2,000 years old when Abraham left it. It is now just a huge mound of rubble in southern Iraq, but at that point it still had another 1,500 years of history ahead of it. Compared to Sumerians and Akkadians, Elamites and Hittites, the Jews are newcomers on the world's stage.

But all the rest are gone, and the Jews are still here. Among the "civilised" peoples who have a written history and a tradition of statehood, the Jews are the oldest surviving people of the planet. They were an identifiable nation, ethno-cultural group, whatever you prefer to call it, five hundred years before the Chinese, a thousand years before the Greeks, over three thousand years before Americans and Nigerians and Pakistanis.

So what? Does this kind of seniority confer special rights or cause better behav-

iour? Obviously not. On the contrary, all that history can heap special burdens on people, and many Jews live in awe of their own people's very existence. They feel obligations towards it that go beyond any rational calculation of self-interest.

They may also be a bit in awe of the role Jews have played in shaping the world's intellectual, moral and cultural landscape, from Abraham, Moses and Jesus to Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Groucho Marx. Not to mention Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan and Steven Spielberg.

There are only 14 million Jews in the world, and apart from Israel there is no country where they form even 5 per cent of the population. Their contributions in every field, but above all in those fields having to do with words, is vastly greater than their actual numbers would imply.

Why? Perhaps because they are the world's oldest literate community, with an ingrained cultural skill in the manipulation of ideas. Perhaps because they are the world's oldest moral community: the story of the flood is universal in the historical legends of all the peoples who originated in the flood plains of lower Mesopotamia, but only the Jewish Bible turned it into a

morality tale of bad behaviour punished and faith rewarded.

All very well, but once again: So what? How does the peculiar and very long history of the Jews help to make sense of Noam Friedman?

Noam Friedman was drowning in history. Probably he is also a religious fanatic, a "fundamentalist" in the modern jargon, but to a large extent even the Jewish religion is about history. And while history can tell you a lot, it is a very poor guide to action in the present.

Israel was not founded because of 4,000 years of history. The Zionist movement's purpose was to create a Jewish homeland as a solution to the highly contemporary problem of the persecution of the Jews in Christian Europe. The historical arguments for putting that homeland in the Levant were secondary — at one point, Zionists were even willing to consider putting it in Madagascar.

Recreating the state of Israel more or less on its original territory has been a source of immense satisfaction and pride for most Jews, even though it raised difficult political, military and moral issues. But even 25 years ago nobody understood how rebuilding Israel

on its original foundations would unleash such powerful historical passions among Jews themselves.

Israel's greatest threat now is not the Palestinians, most of whom have accepted strategic defeat and are hoping to salvage some sort of viable rump state from the wreckage of their hopes. It is not the neighbouring Arab countries, every one of which is willing to make a permanent peace if Israel will simply return to its 1948 borders. It is the huge burden of Jewish history.

Baruch Goldstein, who slaughtered dozens of Arabs near Hebron two years ago, was intoxicated by the history. Yigal Amir, who assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin fourteen months ago, saw himself as an instrument of history. And Noam Friedman tried to kill perfect strangers because he believed that Jewish history demanded it.

History (including Jewish history) is dead; it cannot demand anything. What really matters is the present and the future of the people who are alive today, both Israelis and Palestinians. It will be a grim future if the government of Israel cannot get a firm grip on those of its citizens whom the history has driven mad.

Israel's lethal mix of religion and nationalism

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — When Noam Friedman fired his Israeli Army assault rifle at Palestinians in a Hebron market, he made clear a painful truth. He showed how dangerous the mixture of religion and nationalism in Israel has become.

Mr. Friedman was evidently an unbalanced young man: a psychiatrist had recommended against his being taken into the army. But whatever his mental state, he acted in an atmosphere of fanatical religious nationalism, and he uttered the slogans of the movement.

Asked why he had fired into the crowd, he claimed a religious justification. "Abraham bought the Cave of the Patriarchs for 400 shekels of silver," he said. "No one will return it." That is the biblical episode cited by religious leaders who are trying to prevent the redeployment of Israeli forces from most of Hebron, as required by the Oslo agreements.

A group of nationalist rabbis had called on soldiers to disobey orders to withdraw from Hebron. Rabbi Eliezer Waldman, who heads a yeshiva in the settlement of Kiryat Arba, said: "Soldiers must not follow an order that is against a commandment of the Torah."

Thus the shooting in Hebron showed again what many in Israel's secular majority now consider the greatest menace to their society.

That is the apparent fact that some ultra-Orthodox Israelis do not accept the authority of the democratic state, believing

instead that they can enforce what they view as divine command.

Israel has lost a prime minister to fanaticism. Yigal Amir said after assassinating Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 that he had fulfilled a religious duty. In 1994 Baruch Goldstein, like Mr. Friedman a settler, shot 29 Palestinians to death as they prayed in Hebron.

Nor can those killings be dismissed as the acts of isolated loners. A number of young Israeli women have declared themselves admirers of Yigal Amir. Extremists have made Baruch Goldstein's grave a place of pilgrimage.

The sincerity of ultra-Orthodox believers who see divine authority for territorial claims is not in doubt. Nor can anyone question the emotional attachment of some Jews to places such as Hebron, where Jews lived for many generations until they were massacred in 1929.

But the principle of deciding territorial claims on the basis of ancient religious texts is a recipe for insecurity. The planting of 400 extremist Jewish settlers amid more than 100,000 Palestinians in Hebron has put a heavy burden on the Israeli Army. Think what the world would be like if every tribe and sect pressed its claims on that basis.

Moreover, the idea is in conflict with the historical basis of Zionism. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the movement, wanted a Jewish national homeland not for religious reasons but to enable Jews to live a normal life.

Those who created modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion and the

rest, did not seek to found its legitimacy on biblical text. They sought that legitimacy in international politics and diplomacy: United Nations resolutions, President Harry Truman's crucial support at the state's founding in 1948 and so on.

Most Orthodox Jews rejected Zionism until after World War II, and some still do. It is only in recent years that ultra-Orthodox elements in Israel have acted to enlist the state's military force on behalf of their religious visions — and that nationalists have used religious groups to legitimise their maximalist territorial aims.

That is the mixture that is so dangerous for Israel. It has entangled and complicated the effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The hope of peace can no longer be considered apart from the issue of church and state in Israel.

There was a moment after Mr. Friedman's rampage that dramatized the real demands of peace. The chief of Israel's security service, Ami Ayalon, met the Palestinian security chief, Jibril Rajoub, in public view in the town square of Hebron. They worked out ways to calm the immediate tension.

It was a momentary symbol of a reality that Israelis responsible for security have come to understand.

In the long run, security will not work on a unilateral basis. It will come from a relationship between the two peoples based not on absolutes but on the accommodations of politics: a relationship of mutual respect.

The New York Times

LETTERS

Why is Aqaba empty?

To the Editor:

DURING MY recent visit in Aqaba, I was astonished to see that there were only few tourists when, normally, this is the season, especially for northerners, to spend time on the beaches of the Red Sea.

I tried to find out what the matter was, but the only answer was: "Ask the government".

First time I travelled to Aqaba was in December 1988. We came to ride Arab horses, swim and sunbathe. Everything was fine; Jordanians were very nice, food was marvellous.

Since then, my friends, my daughter with her son and I kept on returning, year after year, and we really enjoyed our holidays.

Short flights, easy handling at the Aqaba airport and quick drives to hotels, all contribute to attracting visitors to Aqaba.

But now, and starting with 1994, the only possible way to fly from Helsinki to Jordan is charter, via Israel. After 1993, no Finnish travel office organised trips to Aqaba. Sunspots offers a flight from Helsinki to Ovda — with the same price we could stay one week in Eilat. Flying to Ovda, 70 kilometres from the border, means that between buses, taxis and border fees we have to pay more than \$100 over and above the overall cost. It also means losing two days for travel and border formalities, especially on the Israeli side.

In contrast to all these are the friendly Jordanians, the very moderate hotel and food prices and, of course, the wonderful beach and weather.

That is why, last time I came here, I felt really sorry when, as I lay on a nice beach almost alone, I realised that all the big hotels were empty and there was no more international tourism. I understand that none of the European countries is organising charter flights to Aqaba anymore. Is it because Aqaba airport cannot cope with the traffic?

Some years ago, Jordan was very eager to get tourists to come to Jordan. Now I see no advertisements anywhere. I only saw hotel staff without work, beaches without sunbathers and shops without buyers.

Sirkka Itävaara,
Finnish Journalist,
Pietari Hannikaisen tie 1 P 83, 00400,
Helsinki, Finland.

NEWS in BRIEF

Gingrich ekes out narrow reelection

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Newt Gingrich was reelected Tuesday speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives with a narrow majority after several members of his own party opposed the Republican leader mired in an ethics controversy. Mr. Gingrich received 216 votes, a bare majority under House rules that require a majority of those voting for a candidate by name. Six members voted for no candidate, saying "present" when their names were called. Richard Gephardt, the Democratic minority leader, was second with 205 votes. The House has 435 members. The 53-year-old Georgia lawmaker became the first Republican in 68 years to win two consecutive terms as speaker, but the ethics controversy made the vote less than routine and leaves the leader of the so-called Republican revolution weakened. Several Republicans broke ranks with Mr. Gingrich, who has been under investigation by a House ethics panel on allegations of improperly using tax-exempt organisations to fund his political activities. Two members voted for moderate Republican Jim Leach of Iowa, and two others voted for former Republican lawmakers in what were apparent protest votes.

Dissidents in Ciller's party form new group

ANKARA (AFP) — Dissidents from Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party formed a breakaway grouping here Tuesday, headed by a former speaker of the Turkish parliament, Husemettin Cindoruk. The new right-wing group, known as the Party of Democratic Turkey (DTP), comprises dissident deputies who opposed Mrs. Ciller's decision last year to form a coalition government with the larger pro-Islamic Welfare Party (Refah) of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. The party holds six seats in the 550-seat parliament.

Hijacker overpowered at Berlin airport

VIENNA (R) — A hijack of an Austrian Airlines plane ended peacefully on Tuesday after the unidentified hijacker was overpowered at a Berlin airport, an Austrian Airlines spokeswoman said. The McDonnell Douglas MD87-ER, carrying 28 passengers and five crew, had taken off from Berlin's Tegel airport for Vienna and was forced to turn back shortly afterwards, she said. "It has ended peacefully. No one has been harmed," the spokeswoman told Reuters. "The hijacker was overpowered." Austrian news agency APA said the hijacker had been apprehended two minutes after the plane touched down and had been taken into custody. Austrian airlines gave no further details but said the Austrian flag carrier was preparing a statement.

Shalikashvili holds talks in Riyadh

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz held talks on Tuesday with the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said. SPA did not say why Gen. Shalikashvili was visiting Saudi Arabia nor how long he would stay. The U.S. general visited here Sept. 1 to consult with the Saudis about an Iraqi military incursion into Kurdish safe havens in northern Iraq.



An elderly Palestinian man gets to his feet to move on after taking a rest alongside Israeli soldiers outside the Jewish settlement of Beit Hadassah in the heart of Hebron on Tuesday. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said an Israeli demand to delay by two years a promised troop pullback from West Bank areas was a key obstacle to a Hebron deal. (Reuters photo)

Israel wants 20-month delay in withdrawals

(Continued from page 1)

Bank until May 1999, 20 months later than required under the Oslo accords. Mr. Arafat insisted the withdrawals be completed according to the Oslo timetable and has refused to sign an already drafted agreement on the transfer of power in Hebron over the issue, the press reports said.

Mr. Ross, who met with Mr. Arafat Monday evening, has reportedly proposed a vaguely worded compromise that would set the final pullback date somewhere in between September of this year and May 1999.

Mr. Asfour accused Mr. Ross of bias towards Israel. "Unfortunately Ross' duty is to help Netanyahu and

not to help the peace process. This leads to the loss of the basis of the neutrality of the American role," he told Reuters. Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rdainah said the PNA was seeking detailed American guarantees Israel would implement interim peace deals to the letter. "We will not sign an agreement without American guarantees," Mr. Abu Rdainah told Reuters. PNA officials said the United States was willing to supply only vaguely worded guarantees.

Israel Radio said a new Netanyahu-Arafat meeting could be held to try to resolve the dispute and sign an agreement on banding Hebron over to Palestinian rule, a move already nine months behind schedule. Under the 1995 interim

agreement on Palestinian autonomy signed by Israel's previous Labour government, the Jewish state was to withdraw its troops from seven main West Bank towns between November 1995 and March last year, ending with Hebron.

Israel was then to band over most West Bank rural areas in three steps staged six months apart running from Sept. 7 last year and Sept. 7, 1997, leaving troops behind only around some 140 Jewish settlements and military sites to be specified in negotiations. During the period of the final withdrawals, Israelis and Palestinians were to begin negotiations on a permanent peace settlement and final status for the Palestinian territories, talks

that should conclude by May 1999, the end of the five-year interim period set out in the Oslo accords.

Israeli commentators said Mr. Netanyahu wanted to hold on to most of the West Bank until the end of the interim period to strengthen his hand in the final status talks.

Several ministers in his right-wing government have also warned they will oppose any Hebron withdrawal if Mr. Netanyahu adheres to the Oslo timetable for the other troop redeployments.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said on Monday that the Hebron agreement itself had already been finalised and put in writing.

King meets IMF chief

(Continued from page 1)

close link between the Middle East peace process and regional economic development. Mr. Camdessus expressed appreciation of Jordan's economic achievements over the last few years. He praised Jordan's efforts to join the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT), pledging the IMF's continued support for Jordan's economy and the economic reform programme.

The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh.

IAF, Baathists sign memo

(Continued from page 1)

al, noting that all groups of the Arab World have the right to exercise political life within the framework of their respective countries' constitution.

"This idea is by no means intended for Jordan or Syria. The IAF advocates it to other countries because we support cooperation with all popular forces," added Dr. Farhan. The IAF statement issued by the IAF office in Amman said: "The talks were characterised by frankness, clarity and the spirit of responsibility and the two sides agreed 'to pursue efforts to ensure solidarity among Arab states and to contribute positively towards backing the ongoing struggle waged by our nation against the colonialist and Zionist policies'."

The statement said the two sides held "serious and useful" negotiations on the current international situation and its impact on the Arab Nation as well as "the Zionist's continued aggression on our lands and our people in Palestine, Lebanon and the Golan in addition to the Dec. 31 bus explosion in Damascus."

The four-member IAF delegation, which was led by Dr. Farhan visited the victims of the bus bomb explosion who are being treated in hospital in the Syrian capital.

GCC meets

(Continued from page 1)

a decades-old dispute with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands, sandbanks and reefs which are under Bahraini control and which are thought to sit atop large oil reserves.

Bahrain also claims the Zubara region off the northern Qatari coast.

Qatar has presented the case to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, Bahrain, which wants the dispute to be resolved within the GCC.

reluctantly presented its own case to the court in September. Qatar says it is ready to withdraw the case if Saudi mediation leads to a solution.

Mystery shots heard in Lima

(Continued from page 12)

we thought," said Miles Kellogg of Chicago, Illinois, who snapped pictures of the building and journalists before sipping a coffee at a local cafe.

Around mid-afternoon Monday, indigenous sorcerers from the northern coastal city of Piura held a ceremony to drive away evil spirits that involved dancing, singing and ritual exhaling smoke from a seashell pipe and spitting water flavoured with herbs. "We've seen lots of war,"

said Juan Arica, 54, referring to Peru's nearly 17-year fight against the Tupac Amaru and the better-known Maoist Shining Path, which the government appeared to have nearly won. "We want peace quickly." The scene was disrupted by a woman who had erected a Roman Catholic shrine nearby and who broke into the ceremony to bless the crowd with the sign of the cross. The call for peace ended in a religious shoving match.

Israeli fair opens today

(Continued from page 12)

An earlier protest action called by the "national committee" appeared to have fizzled out on Sunday when few national flags were visible in Amman.

The committee had called on all Jordanians to raise the national flag "at their workplaces, at their homes and at all buildings" to register their rejection of the Israeli exhibition.

The Al Dustour newspaper establishment printed the national flag and distributed it along with the

Arabic-language daily on Tuesday. Nabil Al Sharif, chief editor of the paper, told the Jordan Times that the move was not politically motivated.

"The distribution of the Jordanian flags came in response to hundreds of requests from our readers who complained that they were having difficulties finding the flags," he said. "We believe that it is normal for a Jordanian newspaper to distribute flags and that act does not even call for an explanation."

Iraq reports murder confession

(Continued from page 1)

had entered Iraq from Jordan in a Saudi car.

The two in detention confessed to having "pursued Omar Ali Sobhi, when he had stopped to fill his car with gasoline about 160 kilometres from Baghdad," said INA.

"They admitted to have shot and killed (Sobhi) and stolen his vehicle," it said.

According to INA, the suspects took the vehicle to Syria, just across the border, and burned it. The agency did not say whether the missing blank passports were recovered.

There was no immediate comment from the government, which had been pressing Baghdad for a thorough investigation into the Sobhi murder and the missing diplomatic bag. Amman had also warned that Jordanian-Iraqi relations could suffer if there was no prompt Iraqi government action to solve the case.

Official sources said the government was not formally notified of the arrests and as such there would be no comment at this point. In the other case, sources said the Iraqi government had formally informed a Western charity group that "several" people had been

arrested in connection with the murder of a Jordanian truck driver who was ferrying 40 tonnes of sugar to Iraq early last year.

"The Iraqi government did not provide the details except that the file has now been closed," said one source.

Earlier reports said up to seven people were being detained in connection with the attack on the sugar truck. Iraqi newspapers said the highway robbers wearing police uniforms had stopped the truck for "inspection" and killed the driver. They took the vehicle into the desert, transferred the cargo onto other vehicles and dismantled the Jordanian truck before burying it.

Incidents of robberies on the 600-kilometre Iraqi stretch of 1,000-kilometre Amman-Baghdad highway have gone up since 1995. In most cases, passengers of small vehicles were held up and allowed to proceed after they were asked to handover cash and valuables.

But at least four Jordanians have been killed in apparent robberies since 1995.

The Amman-Baghdad highway is the main access to and out of Iraq, whose airports remain closed under sweeping U.N. sanctions that include an embargo on air traffic.

Stop violence on television

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

SOMEONE AT Jordan TV must start doing a better job at selecting programmes and shows. Last week, family violence was the main theme. Worse, the presentation of this phenomenon was at best amateurish, lacking in good taste, and lazy.

A few days ago, I sat with my child to watch an Arabic show he told me that he enjoyed. The show was supposed to be a family comedy about the ups and downs in the life of a person named Wanis. In the show, Wanis grabbed his wife by the hair and flung her across the room in a demonstration of anger. She did not say a word. My son was shocked, and so was I and my wife. Thank you JTV for bringing violence to my home and others!

How dare anyone do such a thing to families across the nation? One tries to shelter his/her child from all that is considered ugly and bad. Then enters a show that is supposed to be fun and entertaining for the whole family and it turns out to be an exercise in wife beating. What is family like about flinging one's wife across the room, I wonder. And that is not the end of the story; upon consulting my child, he told me that in the previous episode, Wanis slapped his wife so hard that she had to go to the hospital as a result. Of course, my child will never watch that show again.

Do people at JTV watch these shows before they broadcast them and label them as family shows? Sex and bad language are not the only bad behavioural traits that should be limited to mature audiences. Family violence, though it exists among us in scary statistics, should never be treated callously by the media because that simply normalises the behaviour.

Family violence is a criminal behaviour that should be addressed only by mature viewers and presented as a very sick phenomenon about sick individuals who want to hurt others and it should go in the same category as rape and all the disgusting pathos that sick people are willing to do to other people.

During the same week, JTV showed a late night C-grade movie, something that has become typical of Jordan TV with the budget crunch it has been facing lately. The movie was about husband beating. I believe that this latter show, albeit more careful than the Arabic one, was utterly unentertaining to a couple sitting in front of their TV to watch their tax-sponsored broadcast.

But none of these shows matches an episode of an evening show in the same week where a policeman interviewed the

father of a child — who had obviously just been hospitalised for bone fracture, whipping, bruises and severe burns that had been inflicted by both her parents — and asks them both ill-prepared questions about their family violence. The father, clearly a criminal, was being spoken to by the TV interviewer, as if he were a regular guy discussing his eating or smoking habits. The man belonged in an asylum or, better still, behind bars, somewhere away from humanity. The child showed fear and pain and all the psychological signs that go with being severely beaten by an oppressor who was also sitting next to her. She smiled at her father when he spoke to her, and denied that he ever beat her, a claim she reversed as soon as he left the room. What did the interviewer expect? The child was going to tell the truth just because the interviewer was there? As soon as the TV leaves, her father will revert to thrashing her.

Also, why did the TV crew force her to sit next to her father, in the same room, and answer questions about him, a criminal anywhere in the world? When the father left the room, the child broke into hysterical tears of fear and relief. What was the reason for having the child sit next to the father who had just recently burnt and broken every part of her five-year-old body? This show was not only an exercise in bad taste but also a crime towards the child who must have been severely and permanently damaged by her parents' violence.

If JTV cannot deal with these issues correctly, then why deal with them at all? The fear and pain in the child's eyes was worth more than ratings, which JTV does not care about anyway, and worth more than whatever the TV had intended to elucidate from having the show. And yes, in the Year of the Child, it was obvious that JTV had done little or no planning when it produced the show about the child.

Some may say: "JTV is doing great in the area of violence and sex, it does not come anywhere near Western TV stations which show much more of both." In the West, people can deal with such a phenomenon more aptly because they have more resources to compensate for media sex and violence. They have more and better psychologists, libraries, school counsellors, toys, goods and services that could help counter violence in the media. We do not. Besides, had these shows been on a Western TV station, audiences and concerned citizens would have been ringing phones off the book and they would have complained.

Clashes erupt in S. Lebanon

NAQOURA (Agencies) — Israeli troops and Iranian-backed Hizbollah militia exchanged fire in southern Lebanon on Tuesday as a truce monitoring committee resumed a meeting to discuss complaints of ceasefire violations.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouez said meanwhile Israel should end its occupation of southern Lebanon.

"Israel's technology, army, genius and operations have been unable to create a secure spot in the south," Mr. Bouez said during a reception for foreign diplomats in the capital.

"On the contrary, we believe the losses and problems have increased since the occupation of the south," he added.

"I believe it is time for Israel to be convinced that the occupation of southern Lebanon was costly - and even the costliest of all its wars with the Arabs," Mr. Bouez said. "We believe that it is time for withdrawal from south Lebanon."

Since its 1982 invasion of Lebanon Israel has lost 1,400 soldiers in Lebanon, according to Israeli army count.

On Tuesday, Hizbollah guerrillas fired mortars at Israeli positions and those of the Israeli-backed south Lebanon Army (SLA) in Sujud and Sbuwayya in Israel's self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon, security sources said.

The mortar barrage triggered retaliatory shelling by Israeli troops of the Iqlim Al Tuffah, a hilly Hizbollah stronghold.

The duel came as the truce committee resumed a meeting begun on Monday to discuss complaints filed by Lebanon and Israel over alleged violations of the ceasefire accord, sources close to the Lebanese delegation said.

Israel budgets \$817m for its secret services

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli parliament has boosted the country's secret service budget by \$150 million due to fears of increased violence by Arab and Jewish radicals, an Israeli newspaper reported Tuesday.

The independent daily Haaretz, publishing the budgets of the domestic and foreign intelligence agencies for the first time, said the services had been allocated \$817 million for 1997, 22 per cent higher than last year.

Of the total, \$733 million are slated for the Shin Bet secret service and Mossad foreign intelligence branches and almost \$55 million for the security needs of the government-owned El Al airline, the newspaper said.

The increase comes in light of four suicide bombings by Islamic extremists

early last year in Israel that killed 58 people plus the bombers and concerns about an "increasing threat" from Iran. Haaretz said.

Funds were also added to protect Israeli officials in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish radical in November 1995.

Haaretz said it had determined the new budget for the security services by examining the "general reserves" section of the state budget, a lump sum in which are hidden the funds for the intelligence services, released last week by Finance Minister Dan Meridor.

The Shin Bet and Mossad services and the funding granted them have never been mentioned in any publicised budget of the state of Israel.

Bedouins protest Israeli court order for eviction from ancestral land

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Dozens of bedouins on Tuesday protested a court order that they must leave their West Bank tent camps to make room for an expanding Jewish settlement.

The Jahalin tribe of about 45 families lives near Maale Adumim, the largest West Bank settlement, just east of Jerusalem.

The 50 demonstrators, including about a dozen children, stood alongside the Jerusalem-Jericho highway. They held up signs reading "The world should see the plight of the Jahalin" and "The court decision is racist."

Paramilitary border police surrounded the protesters to keep them off the highway.

In August, Israel's supreme court ruled that the Jahalin must leave the

area where they have been grazing their goats for several decades. The court said each family should be offered a plot near Abu Dis, a West Bank village on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Several members of the tribe rejected the offer, saying the plots they were being offered were close to a garbage dump.

An Israeli army officer said Tuesday that for now, the Jahalin would not be removed by force. "We hope they will go there in goodwill," said Ehud Zarakhia.

However, Israeli Arab legislator Taleb Sanna, whose ancestors are bedouin and who joined Tuesday's protest, said Israel had no right to uproot the Jahalin.

"They can not bury people alive," he said.

Sharp rise in prices prompts UAE government to intervene

ABU DHABI (AFP) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities have decided to intervene in the local market for the first time to combat what they called a sharp increase in prices of most products.

The action followed complaints by consumers that local traders had taken advantage of a large pay rise for local civil servants last month and sharply boosted the prices of food items and other consumer products.

Officials called traders who raised prices greedy and accused them of exploiting UAE citizens after UAE President Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan ordered an increase of 10-30 per cent in their salaries to mark the 25th anniversary of the country's establishment from the merger of seven Gulf emirates.

But traders defended the price increases, saying they were due to the surge in the U.S. dollar, to which the UAE dirham is pegged, as well as a sharp rise in demand following the opening of Iraq's market in December under an oil-for-food deal struck with the United Nations.

"Most of the increases in the prices were before the president's decision to give nationals pay rises," a local trader said.

"There are several external and internal factors. They include the rise in the U.S. dollar, the surge in demand from Iraq, and an

increase in rents and electricity rates. Labour has also become costlier as the market is now suffering from a shortage following the departure of thousands of them," the trader pointed out.

Nearly 200,000 illegal migrants from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries left the UAE in the second half of 1996 after authorities granted them a limited amnesty. Most were unskilled workers employed in restaurants, shops and other small enterprises.

Quoting a source at the presidential court on Monday, the official news agency WAM said a committee had been formed to curb the price rises.

"The committee will work to put an immediate end to the continuous increases in prices of consumer products following the president's gesture to raise the salaries of government employees," the agency said.

"The committee will strictly control the market to face the greediness of traders who have exploited this gesture to raise prices in an irrational way and to prevent them from exploiting the consumers," it added.

This was the first time the authorities have intervened directly in the market, and the move contradicted earlier statements by the economy and commerce min-

istry that it did not intend to interfere, on the grounds that the UAE is a free market.

"We do not deny that there are some greedy traders who have exploited the salary rise to increase prices of some products. But they are very few and this does not have a large effect on the market," a dealer said.

Consumers said most price increases affected foodstuffs such as meat, rice, sugar, coffee and cooking oil. They put the rise at 10-50 per cent.

Officials said the committee would work to reduce prices to below their December level but they did not specify how they would do that.

Sheikh Zayed's order, which took effect this month, benefited only civil servants who are nationals, although they were already paid more than the expatriates, who account for more than 80 per cent of government employees.

The sheikh, marking his recovery from a neck surgery and the UAE silver jubilee, also ordered a one-month bonus for the expatriates.

"I hope the committee will succeed in depressing prices because we will be hurt more than the nationals since we did not get a pay rise," said a non-UAE citizen Arab employee at a government department in Abu Dhabi.

Japan's foreign reserves reach \$217.9b

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's foreign exchange reserves grew \$757 million in December to hit another new record of \$217.9 billion at the end of the month, the finance ministry said Tuesday.

The latest surge in foreign reserves marked three years and two months of uninterrupted increases in the monthly figure.

For the whole year, Japan's reserves were up \$35.1 billion from the \$182.8 billion recorded at the end of 1995.

Japan is presumed to be the world's biggest holder of foreign exchange reserves ahead of China, Germany and Taiwan.

While the finance ministry does not comment on the

changes in the level of reserves, increases often reflect dollar buying by the Bank of Japan to prevent excessive appreciations of the Japanese currency.

In recent months, however, the yen has weakened sharply against the dollar, reducing the need for such central bank intervention.

Meanwhile, a newspaper has recently quoted officials as saying that about 1.2 million Japanese workers would lose their jobs by 2000 if manufacturers continued to shift production bases overseas to avoid high costs at home.

The Asahi Evening News said the international trade and industry ministry issued the warning in a report sub-

mitted to Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto.

The report called on the government to promote industrial reorganisation and create new industries, the newspaper said.

The move to cheaper overseas production, widely referred to as the "hollowing out" of Japan's economy, would continue even if the yen fell against the dollar, the report said.

This trend is being pushed by domestic factors, including an overabundance of industrial regulations, inefficient distribution systems and high corporate income taxes, the report showed.

The report was based on a survey carried out by the ministry covering 200 lead-

ing manufacturers. If the yen-dollar rate stands at 100 yen, the surveyed companies predict an average 1.34 million jobs will be lost by 2000. This figure accounts for about nine per cent of all jobs in the manufacturing industry.

If Japan's economic structure remains unchanged, other industries, such as chemical and steelmakers, will move overseas, the ministry said.

The domestic manufacturing industry has already lost about 500,000 jobs between 1991 and 1995. However, the reduction was offset by an increase of 1.01 million jobs in the construction industry, it said.

Egypt aims for 4.2m tourists in '97

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt hopes to attract 4.2 million tourists in 1997 and increase hotel capacity by 3,700 rooms for a total of 75,000 rooms by 1998, Tourism Minister Mamdouh Al-Beltagi said in statements published Tuesday.

Tourism has been on the increase after a slump triggered by an anti-government drive launched by militants in March 1992 and which has claimed the lives of 1,130 people, including 30 tourists.

Mr. Beltagi said a record 3.8 million holidaymakers visited Egypt in 1996, a year tourism brought in more than \$3 billion and saw the sealing of 263 new tourist schemes, the Egyptian news agency MENA said.

Also last year, Egypt opened new tourist offices in several locations, including Brussels, Jakarta, Kiev, Kuala Lumpur, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul and Warsaw.

Egypt is one of the top three travel destinations for the Japanese, a record 17.5 million of whom are expected to go abroad this year.

The two other favourite destinations for the Japanese are Hong Kong and Las Vegas.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGF	FRF
US Dollar	1.5629	0.5990	1.3520	115.34	1.3590	1534.80	1.7534	5.2778	
DE Mark	0.6848	1.0000	0.7363	63.75	0.6552	7.9362	1.2119	3.3752	
GB Sterling	1.5590	2.6445	1.0000	166.37	1.6533	2.0035	2.5935	2.5703	8.4906
CHF Franc	0.7363	1.3520	0.7363	100.00	1.0047	1134.21	1.2870	3.9017	
JP Yen	0.0067	1.3543	0.5111	1.1714	1.0000	113.30	1.3195	4.5745	
CAD Dollar	0.7338	1.1408	0.4394	0.9793	1.18	1121.87	1.2807	3.8558	
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0171	0.3838	0.0880	1333.33	0.8845	11.41	3.4355	
FR Franc	0.2703	0.2937	0.3382	77.29	0.6572	0.7749	875.43	1.0000	
NG Naira	0.1895	0.2960	0.1117	25.6147	21.82	0.2574	33.22	33.2200	

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	25.35	25.40
WTI	25.25	25.30
Bony	25.35	25.40
Bubal	22.71	22.58
UL Gas	213.00	212.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Ryal	0.2667	0.4169	0.15737	0.36075	30.774
Qatar Dir	0.2723	0.42662	0.16067	0.36138	31.2208
KW Dinar	3.3422	5.22466	1.97239	4.5206	385.854
OM Rial	0.2770	0.44594	1.56544	3.55905	306.091
CY Pound	2.1216	3.3157	1.2514	2.6682	244.844

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	359.1	359.5
Silver (oz)	4.72	4.74
Platinum (oz)	362.5	363.5
AT (3 Months)	2214	2215
CU (3 Months)	2065	2069
Zinc (3 Months)	596	597
Lead (3 Months)	7070	7040

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	Year
USD	5.35	5.42	5.54	5.60	5.73
DEM	6.18	6.58	6.62	6.67	6.72
JPY	0.42	0.42	0.47	0.39	0.41
DEM	3.03	3.04	3.04	3.10	3.13
FRF	3.25	3.25	3.28	3.27	3.30
CHF	1.58	1.62	1.66	1.70	1.73
ITL	7.54	7.19	6.85	6.63	6.54

Main Equity Indices					
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High
New York	DOW JONES	5531.77	-35.41	-0.54	5567.58
New York	S&P 500	743.54	-4.11	-0.55	747.65
London	FT-SE 100	4083.3	-23.2	-0.58	4108.9
Frankfurt	DAX	2886.13	-4.81	-0.17	2896.36
Paris	CAC 40	2302.44	-4.23	-0.18	2315.25
Frankfurt	DAX	2886.13	-4.81	-0.17	2896.36

Energy		
Commodities	Last	Delivery
Coffee (Arabica)	115.57	Spot
Cocoa (Shim)	1385	Spot
Sugar (Shim)	315	Spot
Wheat (Shim)	126	Spot
Soya (Shim)	21.55	Spot
Rice (Shim)	2.07	Spot
Rice (Shim)	470	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Bid	Sell
US Dollar	0.706	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1933	1.2043
DE Mark	0.434	0.4563
CHF Franc	0.6225	0.5268
FR Franc	0.1344	0.1351
JP Yen	0.6134	0.6165
NL Guilder	0.4045	0.4065
IT Lira	0.4615	0.4638

EU warned it has no alternative to farm reform

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The European Union (EU) may have to slash its beef, dairy and cereal production and jeopardise other vital trade interests if it does not act to bring its agricultural prices into line with world levels, its senior trade official has warned.

"Prices must come down," Sir Leon Brittan said in a speech to the Irish Cooperative Organisation Society in Dublin. "Our agriculture industry must be able to operate on world markets without subsidy; we must be able to compete effectively against imports from elsewhere."

Sir Brittan's intervention came

amid increasing debate about the future of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

The policy, which guarantees farmers prices that are frequently well above world market levels (around 15 per cent for wheat for example), accounts for nearly half the EU's 80 billion European Currency Units (ECU) budget.

"Farming remains essential for rural development but it is illusory to think that policy can be based exclusively on agriculture," Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler has said Monday.

He emphasised that in many

rural parts of the EU farming now accounts for less than half the jobs.

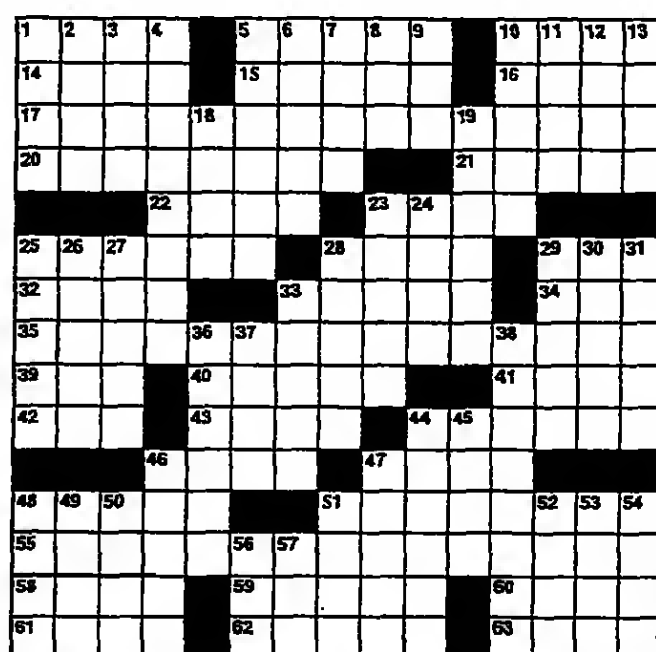
"We have to change our thought patterns here," he said. "If it maintains its current level of cereal production, the EU will be producing a surplus of 40 million tonnes by the end of the century — well in excess of the 25 million tonne ceiling on subsidised exports it is committed to implementing by 1999 under the Uruguay Round world trade accord, Sir Brittan said.

A similar crunch is looming in the dairy and beef sectors.

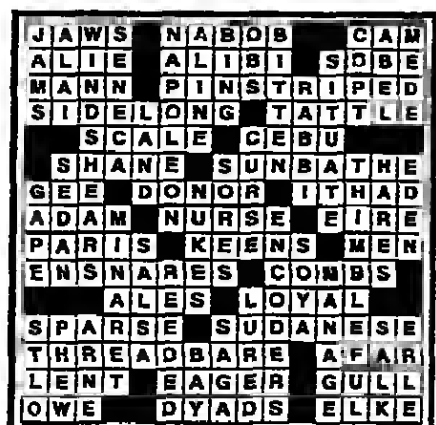
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Chief
- 5 Temperate
- 10 Conforming in every detail
- 14 Mr. Gardner
- 15 Gray mineral
- 16 Bucket
- 17 Card games
- 20 Appraise
- 21 Mountain crest
- 22 Give up
- 23 Grade
- 25 Gypsy
- 28 Wind instrument
- 29 Weep aloud
- 32 Q.E.D. word
- 33 Sky pad
- 34 Greek letter
- 35 Card games
- 39 Comp. pt.
- 40 Straighten
- 41 Made a hole in one
- 42 — Altos
- 43 Story
- 44 Pastry shop
- 46 — qua non
- 47 Busy place
- 48 Texas shrine
- 51 Hits a ball that is caught
- 55 Card games
- 58 Perceive directly
- 59 NCO
- 60 Plain weave fabric
- 61 Heirs
- 62 Church official
- 63 Gaelic



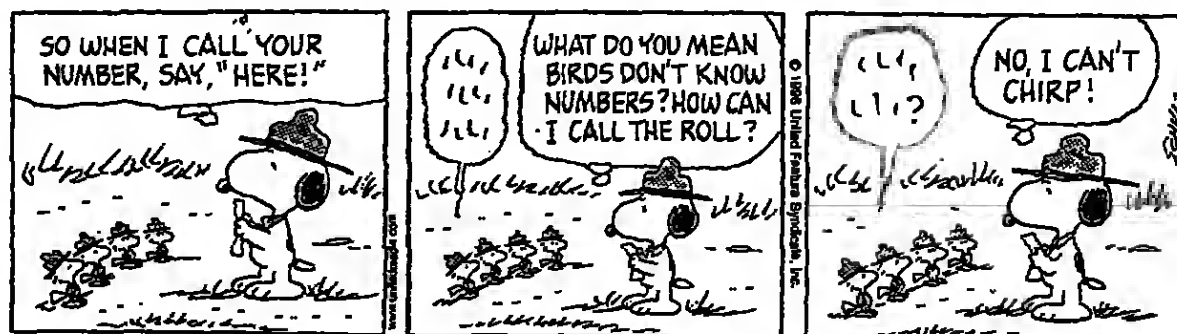
by Harold B. Counts



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- DOWN
- 1 Cupbearer to the gods
- 2 Goes astray
- 3 Came down
- 4 Apply
- 5 Unfurling
- 6 Preach
- 7 Study hard
- 8 Remnant
- 9 Cheering word
- 10 Swiss stream
- 11 Catcher's glove
- 13 Otherwise
- 18 FBI agents
- 19 Made money
- 23 Stupid one
- 24 Seed coat
- 25 Ward off
- 26 ME town
- 27 Constructs
- 28 Shilly-shally
- 29 Last frontier
- 30 Willow
- 31 Hen
- 33 Old-womanish
- 36 Fixed portion
- 37 Author patron
- 38 Ascertain
- 44 Notebook cover
- 45 State firmly
- 46 Pintail ducks
- 47 Door fastener
- 48 Inquires
- 49 Jay of TV
- 50 English river
- 51 Fat
- 52 Hebrew measure
- 53 Kin of refs
- 54 Kind
- 56 Apply
- 57 Buddy

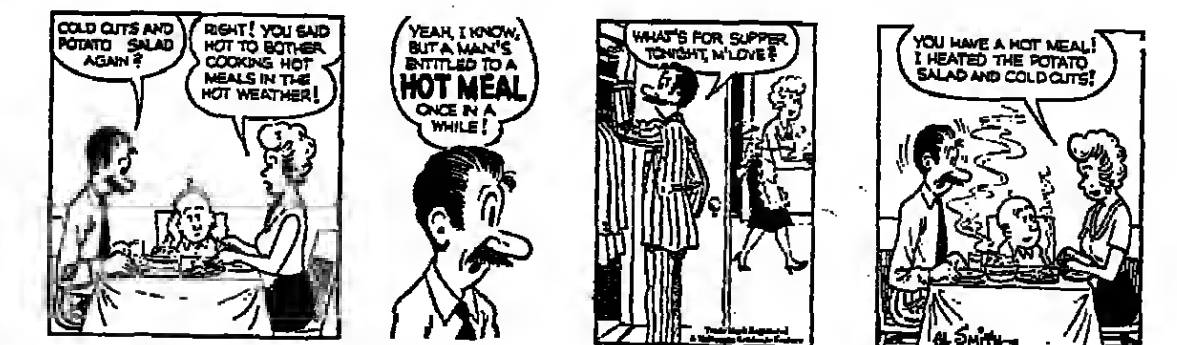
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY JANUARY 8, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Have more concern for those who are discouraged today and do whatever will best cheer them up so that you make a bad situation any worst. Later this evening you can seek out the assistance of knowledgeable people on a new project.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Think of those who are having a hard time today and plan how to make their lives easier and you can make yourself feel better. Be a true humanitarian and you can gain the appreciation for your actions and become prosperous.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Make a list of the individuals you want to see during the days ahead so that you won't forget anyone who could be important to your career activities. This evening will be good for you to go out on the town with friends.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make sure that everything is in tip-top condition with your home today just in case you have some unexpected guest over and thereby you can have a warm welcome. Get any business activities completed so that you can relax.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Run out for last-minute shopping which has occurred today and then get your home sparkling for close friends who drop by for a visit. Later tonight, you can spend some quality time with your mate at a romantic spot.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study four assets and liabilities today and know how much you have for a rainy day without going under. Be practical in your career activities so that you don't discover in the days ahead you were incorrect.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Take your rightful place in the scheme of career activities and make to best of any difficult situations, so that you are not being the eight ball. See only those persons who can help you to make the right decisions.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get right the tasks you have neglected lately and they are soon behind you. Help your mate when necessary and show that are appreciative of him or her in your life and make every effort to be romantic when possible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you have a close friend who is in need of money, give cash as a present and thereby you will gain the admiration of this individual. Later this evening you should be careful while on the highway to avoid any difficulties.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you have difficulties today, handle them efficiently and thereby you can make things better in the days ahead. Don't forget to give praise to fellow associates so that you can rely upon their assistance at a later time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have new acquaintances today which you need to impress so make every effort to gain their recognition. This would be a good day for such and you can gain the recognition of those in authority who can be of assistance.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You can decide today upon what course of action you wish to take with fellow associates to complete tasks which you have put aside. Don't rely on hunches, however, use fine judgement which has not failed you previously.

Birthingstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Jordan's cost of living index climbs 7.1 points

AMMAN (Petra) — The standard cost of living index for the year 1996 reached 115.6 points compared with 109.5 points for the year 1995. According to the sources at General Statistics Department the index for 1996 represents an increase of 7.1 points, while the relative increase was 6.5 points, which represents the inflation rate for 1996. The sources attributed the increase in prices to the rising prices of food by seven points, clothing and shoes by 10.1, housing by 5.1 and other commodities and services by 5.9 points.

Palestine Airlines makes first flight today

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The first flight of Palestine Airlines is to take off from Egypt Wednesday for Jordan, Saudi Arabia, after Israel refused permission to operate out of the Gaza Strip, officials said.

Fayez Zeidan, head of the Palestinian Aviation Department, told AFP that a 59-passenger Fokker-50, painted in the Palestinian colours of green, red, white and black, will leave from Port Said to take Muslim pilgrims to Mecca.

"This flight marks the inauguration of Palestine Airlines," he said.

Two Fokker-50 airliners, donated by the Netherlands, constitute the new airline's entire fleet. They are to fly two flights a day over the next five days, transporting 523 pilgrims to Mecca, Islam's holiest place.

The pilgrims will have to travel by bus from the Gaza Strip through the Egyptian border town of Rafah to reach the airport at Port Said.

"The Israelis refused us authorisation to take off from Gaza," Mr. Zeidan said. "We hope that the next flight will leave from Gaza."

The Palestinian National Authority has almost completed the construction of an airport in the southern Gaza Strip, as part of the autonomy accord signed with Israel, but Israeli authorities have refused to give a green light to operate because of differences over security.

Britain's building societies forsake mutual ownership for capitalist path

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's building societies, established from the 18th century as mutually-owned ventures, are increasingly taking the path towards full-blown capitalism by converting into publicly owned banks.

On Monday, the third-highest building society, the Woolwich, said it would float on the London Stock Exchange in July, to become one of Britain's top 10 banks in terms of total assets, with current funds of 30 billion pounds (\$50.5 billion).

The Woolwich and other big mutual societies are following in the footsteps of the Abbey National, which launched the trend in 1989 by becoming a bank.

By the end of 1997, three of the existing top four building societies, companies which are owned by account holders who deposit funds in them, and traditionally focused on house loans and savings, will have renounced their mutual status.

Amid growing competition in the financial services market, their aim is to expand into a wider range of financial services and raise funds by tapping into the capital markets, which are off-limits to building societies.

"We want the flexibility to continue to grow and continue to offer a broader range of services and geographical coverage," explained Hillary McVitty, a spokeswoman for the Woolwich.

In June, the country's biggest building society, the Halifax, which has assets of more than 100 billion pounds, also intends to take the plunge, and convert from mutual status to a public bank.

And the Alliance and Leicester, the fourth-biggest building society, and the Northern Rock, also plan to join the stock market in 1997.

Building societies have been able to expand beyond their core business of house loans and savings into areas such as life insurance and investment trusts since rules governing them were relaxed in 1987.

But with any major move requiring a vote of approval by the society's members (nine million, in the case of the Halifax), which can only take place once a year at the annual general meeting, room for manoeuvre is still limited.

"There are substantial restrictions on the speed and scope of operations we can go into," said the Woolwich spokeswoman, adding that banks, which since the 1980s have been increasingly muscling in on the house loan market, operate in a much freer environment.

"The legislative framework governing building societies is substantially more restrictive than that which applies to banks," she said.

And this is a time when competition is intensifying in the financial services arena, with retailers such as Marks and Spencer, and entrepreneur Richard Branson's Virgin Group, entering into the market.

However, nationwide, the second-largest building society, is bucking the trend to keep its mutual status.

Remaining a building society frees nationwide from the necessity of maximising profits in order to pay out dividends to shareholders, explained a spokesman.

Since building societies' surplus revenues are always reinvested, this allows nationwide to undercut banks, by offering lower home loan interest rates and higher savings rates for investors, he said.

Nonetheless, apart from nationwide, most of the big players will have converted to banks soon. Some 70 or 80 smaller building societies will be the ones that remain.

Daily Beat

IDB boosts lending by 105%

** THE INDUSTRIAL Development Bank (IDB) has boosted its lending by 105 per cent in 1996 as it extended 163 loans for a total of JD43 million. Of these loans, 122 credits for a total of JD28 million were awarded to industrial projects with the remaining 41 loans, amounting to a total of JD15 million, given to finance tourism projects. As such industrial loans accounted for 65 per cent of the total number of credits compared to 35 per cent received by the tourism sector.

The projects which were financed carry a total investment of JD186 million and will create 3,000 new job openings, the bank said, adding that the projects will generate a JD24 million in value added income during the first year of operation.

The bank said its lending to the industrial sector covered food, chemical, mining, plastic and paper industries among many others whereas hotels and restaurants were the main recipients in the tourism sector.

Other activities carried out by the IDB last year were preparing 32 feasibility studies for interested investors at no cost and preparing seven sectoral studies to identify the problems in these sectors and to help adopt the appropriate financing strategies for them. The sectors were in the fields of drugs, chemical industries, home appliances, vegetable oil, detergents, steel and olive presses.

In providing loans to small handicraft industries, the bank extended 30 soft loans, amounting to JD200,000, to finance purchases of equipment and machinery as well as raw materials to small handicraft industries throughout the Kingdom (Al Ra'i).

IMF may give Jordan \$100m loan

** A HIGH ranking government official has said that in light of implementing structural reforms and the positive results achieved, it is hoped that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would approve disbursing more than \$100 million this year as a third payment of a \$295 million loan that the IMF approved for Jordan in February 1996.

The IMF has released \$60 million as the second payment of the aforementioned loan last August (Al Aswak).

Raytheon acquires Texas Instruments defence unit

LEXINGTON, Massachusetts (AFP) — The U.S. electronics firm Raytheon announced Monday it would acquire the defence unit of Texas Instruments for \$2.95 billion, the latest deal in a trend toward consolidation in the U.S. defence industry.

Raytheon said in a statement here the transaction would increase its annual revenues to around \$15 billion and bolster its stature in the defence electronics sector.

The Wall Street Journal on Monday said the deal would also boost Raytheon's chances of acquiring the defence holdings of Hughes Electronics, a unit of General Motors. Hughes is preparing to sell off its defence interests, valued at around \$9 billion.

The successful bidder will control a defence enterprise that could compete against current giants Lockheed Martin and Boeing, according to the journal, which added that Northrup Grumman was also in the running for Hughes.

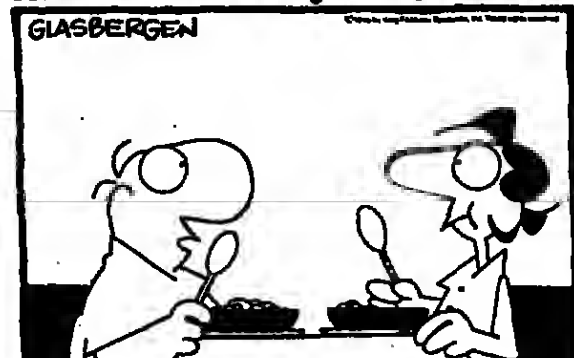
Boeing last month acquired McDonnell Douglas, another U.S. defence industry powerhouse, for \$14 billion.

Raytheon said its bid for Texas Instruments, which must receive federal regulatory approval, should be completed during the second quarter of this year.

"We have consistently said that we will remain a top-tier player in the defence industry," said

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET													
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDAN													
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 07/01/1997													
PAGE 12	MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF	VALUE	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE				
12/96	LOW				SHARES	TRADED	PRICE	PRICE					
1	259.500	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.2	1.35	25	1340	347600	255.00	260.00	5.00	+	0.00
2	5.500	4.250	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.5	2.94	1	500	2550	5.70	5.10	-0.60	-	0.00
3	1.230	0.880	MIO. EAST INV. BK.	74.9	0.00	26	23750	26938	1.14	1.14	-	-	0.00
4	2.700	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.1	6.24	2	300000	657132	2.20	2.23	0.03	+	0.00
5	5.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.5	2.95	2	632	2984	4.73	4.68	-0.05	-	0.00
6	2.950	2.440	JOR. RUMALT BANK	19.3	0.00	4	843	2218	2.61	2.66	0.05	+	0.00
7	1.090	0.880	JOR. GULF BANK	5.8	7.14	6	14000	13720	0.97	0.98	0.01	+	0.00
8	4.180	2.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.1	0.00	17	3042	11384	3.69	3.77	0.08	+	0.00
9	3.210	1.730	BRIT. AL-HAL (BRITNA)	1.1	8.33	2	300	534	1.73	1.80	0.07	+	0.00
10	1.450	1.000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	10	5844	1486	1.30	1.30	-	-	0.00
BANK SECTOR TOTALS													
INDEX: 197.70 %CHG: +1.50													
2	2.820	1.830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.47	2	500	955	1.89	1.91	0.02	+	0.00
3	2.400	1.850	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.7	7.80	1	1000	2050	2.00	2.05	0.05	+	0.00
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS													
INDEX: 120.86 %CHG: +0.33													
1	1.830	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PUB.	31.4	7.32	3	647	1059	1.63	1.64	0.01	+	0.00
2	9.250	7.800	JOR. BOTEL TOURISM	17.7	1.99	7	86750	715668	8.05	8.05	-	-	0.00
3	1.560	1.250	IRBIO ELECTRICITY	9.6	6.80	2	1900	2898	1.47	1.47	-	-	0.00
4	10.480	8.720	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	6.9	5.63	2	325	2080	6.65	6.40	-0.25	-	0.00
5	7.300	6.650	JORDAN TANNING	6.9	0.00	2	250	165	1.25	1.27	0.02	+	0.00
6	1.590	1.150	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	56.4	0.00	4	800	1011	1.35	1.37	0.02	+	0.00
7	3.750	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	75.6	0.00	2	752	668	2.73	2.65	-0.08	-	0.00
8	7.950	6.400	JOR. MORTGAGE HILLS	8.8	3.65	1	40	341	6.80	6.85	0.05	+	0.00
9	4.730	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	19.4	5.63	5	342	1210	3.54	3.55	0.01	+	0.00
10	2.200	2.080	RAPIA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	1	200	276	1.43	1.38	-0.05	-	0.00
11	7.550	4.250	DAR ALHAMA BV. INV.	13.4	4.08	1	1000	4900	4.85	4.90	0.05	+	0.00
12	5.800	3.120	ARAB ALUM. IND.	9.0	6.74	7	1650	5016	1.65	1.64	-0.01	-	0.00
13	1.960	1.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	67	104590	66780	6.64	6.65	0.01	+	0.00
14	1.440	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	8.2	8.63	11	21950	76340	1.19	1.20	0.01	+	0.00
15	1.580	1.120	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	6.0	8.13	47	61650	3366	1.24	1.27	0.03	+	0.00
16	1.050	0.510	NATIONAL INDUS.	10.7	6.00	1	1000	43400	0.69	0.72	0.03	+	0.00
17	1.650	0.930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	18	13800	15692	1.11	1.15	0.04	+	0.00
18	1.270	0.980	JOR. POCMOOL INDUS.	9	0.00	7	2300	1915	0.82	0.83	0.01	+	0.00
19	1.270	0.670	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	9	0.00	5	1050	872	0.86	0.93	0.07	+	0.00
20	1.780	1.080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.3	0.00	33	4350	6273	1.43	1.45	0.02	+	0.00
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS													
INDEX: 113.85 %CHG: -0.19													
GRAND TOTAL													
INDEX: 153.57 %CHG: +0.74													
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 07/01/1997													
1	0.800	0.500	JOR. TRADE FAC.	14.4	0.00	16	7900	4257	0.52	0.54	0.02	+	0.00
2	0.990	0.700	UNION INV. SOI	68.9	0.00	4	1469	323	0.72	0.72	-	-	0.00
3	1.010	0.720	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	4	124100	57557	0.45	0.47	0.02	+	0.00
4	0.640	0.310	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	2	3500	1255	0.34	0.35	0.01	+	0.00
5	0.800	0.510	ARAB FOOD & HED.	9	0.00	7	6150	3851	0.60	0.63	0.03	+	0.00
6	1.730	1.180	WATL. CHELORINE	9	0.00	6	6250	8513	1.36	1.37	0.01	+	0.00
7	0.690	0.450	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	6	4050	2147	0.52	0.53	0.01	+	0.00
8	0.910	0.520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	1400	812	0.97	0.98	0.01	+	0.00
9	0.990	0.400	NATL. MOLT. IND. MANICO	9	0.00	73	182650	98236	0.51	0.54	0.03	+	0.00
10	0.920	0.570	JORDAN TRADING	9	0.00	7	1008	2356	0.75	0.76	0.01	+	0.00
11	0.720	0.430	ARAB ELECT. INDUS. S.I.	9	0.00	1	3100	1550	0.50	0.50	-	-	0.00
12	1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO TSK	9	0.00	4	2250	1800	1.03	1.05	0.02	+	0.00
13	0.800	0.570	RAFI PHARM. 651	9	0.00	5	7700	1848	0.60	0.59	-0.01	-	0.00
14	0.800	0.390	INDUS. ENG.	26.5	0.00	13	15950	6797	0.42	0.43	0.01	+	0.00
15	1.380	0.760	INDUS. CERAMIC	9	0.00	1	250	198	0.79	0.79	-	-	0.00
16	1.020	0.800	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	70.2	0.00	7	50600	50600	1.00	1.00	-	-	0.00
17	1.350	0.530	MIO. EAST COMPLEX	8.6	0.00	60	137250	100137	0.71	0.73	0.02	+	0.00
GRAND TOTAL													
INDEX: 277 557527 342126													

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I made stew to use up all our holiday leftovers. The crunchy parts are candy canes."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NYWEL
FYTHE
CAHBLE
FEWURC

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: MADAM DOILY GOVERN SNUGLY
Answer: Easy to lose on a family vacation - YOUR MIND

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Capriati downs Rubin at Sydney International

SYDNEY (AFP) — American Jennifer Capriati gave her tennis rehabilitation further authenticity with a fighting three-sets victory over compatriot Chanda Rubin at the Sydney International tournament here Tuesday.

Capriati, out to wipe the slate clean after drug and shoplifting charges which all but snuffed out her precocious tennis career three years ago, was rebuffed the higher-ranked Rubin, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in a 103-minute opening round match.

Capriati, 21 in March and ranked 36 in the world, was imbued by her success over the highly-regarded Rubin and gave promise of making a go of her tennis career after her seamy past.

Beating her trademark smile, Capriati announced "I'm back" after mastering the 17th-ranked Rubin, a semi-finalist at last year's Australian Open, and the notorious unsettling winds on white city's centre court.

"It's a great boost. It's like I'm back and that I still have what it takes to beat a player like Chanda and it shows I've come a long way since I

played her last time," Capriati said of her last meeting with Rubin in Indian Wells, California, last March.

Assessing her strengths since she broke into the tennis world as a 14-year-old in 1990, Capriati said: "I think overall everything is stronger, I don't know if that is because I am older, more mature ... it's not like little kids' tennis any more."

Capriati, fatigued by tennis "burn-out" and following regular spats with his father-coach Stefano, dropped out of the tour near the end of 1993.

In December, 1993, she was arrested on a shoplifting charge in Florida and in May, 1994 she was charged with possession of marijuana and had two stints in drug rehabilitation clinics as penance.

There were signs that her comeback was for real last November when she beat Monica Seles in straight sets to reach the final of a Chicago tournament.

Capriati was Tuesday typically strong on her forehand hitting 10 winners to Rubin's eight, and she was

equally powerful on the backhand outscoring her opponent, 8-3.

Her next round opponent will be Canadian Rene Simpson and her chances of repeating her 1993 Sydney tournament triumph were further improved when top seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, in her top half of the singles draw, was upset by American Amy Frazier, 6-3, 6-3.

It was the Spaniard's first opening round loss as a top seed in a tournament, but she said, it was her first match since mid-November and she had made many unforced errors.

Sanchez Vicario was not the only top seed to crash out Tuesday.

South African second seed Wayne Ferreira fell to Spaniard Carlos Moya, 2-6, 6-0, 6-3 while former French open champion Sergi Bruguera eliminated fellow Spaniard and fifth seed Felix Mantilla, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Mary Pierce's tournament ended after losing 6-4, 6-4 to Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki in a second round match and eighth-seeded Amanda



Jennifer Capriati

Coetzer of South Africa bombed out to American Mary Joe Fernandez, 6-1, 3-6, 6-2.

Australian wild card Rachel McQuillan dumped big-serving Dutch seventh seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy, 6-4, 6-7 (0/7), 6-4, while Croatian third seed Iva Majoli put paid to French qualifier Sarah Pitkowski, 6-2, 6-1.

Frenchman Guy Forget withdrew from his first round match against South African Grant Stafford. He

was troubled by a blistered hand.

Compatriot Neville Godwin, who replaced Forget as a lucky loser, went down to Stafford, 6-4, 6-1.

Swiss starlet Martina Hingis overcame a second set hiccup to beat Belgian opponent Sabine Appelmans 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in a night second round match.

Second seeded Hingis said she needed a tough match in preparation for next week's Australian open.

The Swiss 16-year-old

said she was glad to play her first match under lights at white city after getting sunburnt while practising on the outside courts during breaks at the Hopman Cup in the midst of a Perth heat-wave last week.

She said she was happy to get through her first round match after blowing four match points before losing to Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu in the first round of last year's Sydney tournament.

Courier vows to give Open 'another shake'

MELBOURNE (R) — Fallen American tennis star Jim Courier, climbing back up the rankings after a win in the Qatar Open last week, declared himself happy with his game on Tuesday and keen to give this month's Australian Open "another shake".

Sandwiched between five of the world's top 10 players at a joint news conference, Courier said he wanted to turn his back on a disappointing 1996 and begin the year afresh with another tilt at the title he won in 1992 and 1993.

"I didn't have a very good season last year for whatever reason, but that's a closed chapter and I'm going to do better this year," the former world No 1 told reporters.

The two-time winner of both the Australian and French Opens was speaking on the eve of a small but star-studded exhibition tournament, the colonial classic, a warm-up event for the Open which starts at Melbourne Park on Monday.

Courier is ranked 15 in the world after his 7-5, 6-7, 15-7, 6-2 defeat of Britain's Tim Henman in Qatar, having ended 1996 at No 26, his lowest year-end ranking in eight years.

"I played well last week," Courier said. But he added that he needed more tough matches before embarking on his eighth Australian Open campaign.

"It's a nice warm-up to play against these great players sitting beside me," said Courier, who has drawn world No 4 Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia in the first round of the three-day Colonial Classic.

The exhibition also includes the world's top two ranked players, Pete Sampras and Michael Chang, as well as Germany's Boris Becker, who is defending his Australian Open title this year and has a deep ambi-



Jim Courier

tion to reach world No 1 again.

Becker, who snared his sixth Grand Slam when he beat Chang at Melbourne Park last year, had a patchy year in 1996 with injuries forcing him out of the French Open and Wimbledon and, last week, the Qatar Open.

He too is looking for a good hit-out before the Open.

"There's a very tough tournament ahead of me with very tough players. I have to improve my form and get match tough," said a leather-jacketed Becker, now ranked No 6.

The colonial classic offers minimal prize money and its chief attraction to the players is the opportunity of a timely warm-up on the same rebound ace surface as at Melbourne Park.

Chang, who was won the past two classics but has yet to clinch a second Grand Slam since winning the 1989 French Open, said he felt this year's Australian Open could be his.

"The last couple of

years have been great tournaments for me," said Chang, runner-up in last year's Australian and U.S. Opens. "I've been able to follow it (the colonial classic) up and do quite well at the Australian, so I'm hoping to go one better (this year)."

As for the world number one, Sampras named his third-round nemesis at last year's Australian open, big-hitting local Mark Philippoussis, as a danger to the seeded players. Philippoussis dropped out a Sydney tournament this week because of tendonitis and was resting before the Open.

"I've played him three or four times now and each time it's like a war zone trying to return his serve," Sampras said.

Australia's Jason Stoltenberg, a semifinalist at Wimbledon last year, underwent wrist surgery on Tuesday and withdrew from both the Open and the Colonial Classic.

Injured Seles to miss Australian Open

LOS ANGELES (R) — Four-time Australian Open champion Monica Seles will be unable to defend her title next week at the year's first Grand Slam tournament due to a broken finger.

The results of X-rays taken on the injured finger on Friday eliminated the possibility of Seles competing in Melbourne, according to a statement issued by the publicist for the world's second-ranked woman tennis player on Monday.

Seles broke her right ring finger in two places — the finger tip and the knuckle — while warming up for an exhibition tournament last month and has been unable to play since December 4.

Seles won her fourth Australian Open title last year, bringing her incredible match record in the event to a perfect 28-0.

She also won the Australian Open in

1991, 1992 and 1993 before missing the event the next two years after being stabbed during a tournament in Hamburg in April of 1993.

"I want so much to return to Australia, where I have so many happy memories and good friends," Seles said. "All I can do is look forward to 1998 with great anticipation."

The broken finger is the latest in a series of injuries which have plagued Seles since she returned to competitive tennis in August of 1995.

She was slowed by tendonitis in her knees in 1995 and suffered a muscle tear in her left shoulder while winning last year's Australian Open.

The shoulder injury forced her to miss several tournaments last year and hampered her ability to serve throughout 1996.

Dodgers for sale

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles Dodgers owner Peter O'Malley announced Monday that he intends to sell the team, which his family has controlled since 1950.

O'Malley's father, Walter, gained control of the Dodgers 47 years ago and moved the franchise from Brooklyn to Los Angeles after the 1957 season, triggering the nationwide expansion of the Major Leagues.

"I think the thought occurred to me with more and more frequency," he finally occurred to me that this is the time," O'Malley said. "My family supports this decision unanimously."

The Dodgers have been one of baseball's most successful teams, finishing first or second 19 times in the last 27 seasons and winning the last five National League Rookie of the year awards.

The O'Malley family is second in seniority among baseball ownership groups, trailing only the family of Tom Yawkey, which purchased the Boston Red Sox after the 1933 season.

"My responsibility now is to find the best possible owner for this ballclub," O'Malley said. "I don't know how long that will take."

Baseball's record price for a franchise is \$173 million, paid by Peter Angelos' group for the Baltimore Orioles in 1993. The Dodgers probably will sell for well over \$200 million; the team owns Dodger Stadium and the land around the ballpark, located near downtown Los Angeles.

"It will not be a circus," O'Malley said.

O'Malley had been discussing the move privately in recent weeks but didn't make his intentions known until he called NL president Len Coleman today and then informed Dodgers employees.

O'Malley has been president of the team since March 17, 1970, and is the longest active team president in Major League baseball.

His father was team president of the team from 1950-70.

Before that, branch Rickey served as the Dodgers president from 1942-50. It was during that time that Jackie Robinson became the first black to appear in the Majors, in 1947.

Ferguson awaits European League

LONDON (R) — Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has predicted a European League will become reality in the near future.

"There have been many people over the years who have spoken of a European League and I could never see it happening. Now I think it might," said Ferguson, whose side will be involved in the quarter-finals of the European Cup in March.

"The UEFA Cup has grown to 128 teams and there's going to be an expansion of the Champions' League next season. Certain nations will also need to play 12 games to qualify for the World Cup."

"Somewhere along the line we have to reduce the games and I'm sure that will be at club level."

UEFA want every European League to play 34 games, which would mean losing two clubs, for example, from the English Premier League.

"Because UEFA is so powerful nobody wants to miss the boat in terms of European football and so we will all go along with it. It's progress I suppose," said Ferguson.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

League cup quarters postponed

LONDON (AFP) — Severe frost forced the postponement of Stockport's English League cup tie at home to Southampton on Tuesday meaning both of the day's scheduled quarter-finals are off. The Ipswich V Leicester tie was called off on Monday in yet another victim of the freezing weather which has gripped the country over the Christmas and New Year period. The Stockport V Southampton game was initially thought to have beaten the conditions but the Edgeley Park pitch was ruled unplayable on Tuesday morning after a severe cold overnight.

Clough in line for Forest job

LONDON (R) — The Clough Dynasty at Nottingham Forest could be extended if the English club's off-field financial uncertainty is resolved quickly. Caretaker-manager Stuart Pearce was said to be ready to install Nigel Clough, son of Brian, as his assistant should current deputy Alan Hill carry out his threat to quit the troubled club. Hill was considering his future after the failure of another consortium to gain power at a shareholders meeting on Monday. The breakdown also means Pearce will have to wait for cash to spend on new players, delaying his attempts to sign the on-loan Clough from Manchester City on a permanent basis. He may finally be able to strengthen the League's bottom club later this month if a new consortium headed by property millionaire Nigel Wray has a formal bid accepted by shareholders. Brian Clough managed Forest from 1975 to 1993.

Pioline out of Australian Open

PARIS (R) — French No 1 Cedric Pioline has withdrawn from the Australian Open starting in Melbourne on Monday with back trouble. But Pioline would be fit for France's opening Davis Cup defence against Australia in Sydney from February 7 to 9, his agent said.

Knup back at Basle

GENEVA (R) — Swiss striker Adrian Knup returned to the club where he began his career when he was re-signed by Basle from Galatasaray on Tuesday. Knup, who has scored 26 goals in 48 international appearances, was with the Swiss club from 1980 to 1988. He joined Galatasaray from Karlsruhe last season.

European Basketball

All-French clash kicks off second phase

PAU, France (R) — Villeurbanne will be less than pleased by Pau-Orthez's timely recovery of their influential Frenchman Antoine Rigaudau and discovery of the full scoring potential of American Lawrence Funderburke.

The two French sides meet in the Euroleague second phase at Pau on Wednesday, one day ahead the rest of the matches in the four pools of six of the second phase.

The American pivot, who will be making his Euroleague debut, scored 30 points and 10 rebounds in Pau's 89-83 win at Le Mans in the French championship at the weekend as Rigaudau made a commanding return after six weeks' absence through injury.

"Antoine's return did us a world of good, we were able to profit from his ability to make the others better," Pau's coach Jacques Montclar said after Saturday's victory that kept Pau at the top of the French championship.

"We had to do without Antoine for a month and a half. With him a lot of things change," said club president Pierre Seillant. Funderburke was the perfect foil for Rigaudau and they will be looking to combine as effectively on Wednesday.

Villeurbanne, who lost the French finals to Pau last season but fared better than their compatriots in the first phase of the Euroleague, have also been strengthened by the return after injury of Alain Digbeu.

Villeurbanne also won at the weekend but should have crushed Montpellier after building a 23-point lead early in the second half. They allowed them back into the match, eventually winning 67-59.

"I was not really scared we might lose but the problem is we still don't know how to kill off a match," Villeurbanne's coach Greg Beugnot said.

Wednesday's clash will pit Rigaudau against Villeurbanne's American playmaker Delaney Rudd who were voted most valuable French and foreign player respectively in France last season.

Both are among the top five scorers in the championship this season with an average per game of more than 20 points.

It promises to be an exciting clash of two of the highest scoring attacks in France. Pau won five and lost five of their first phase games, finishing in the bottom half of their group and going through to the same pool as Villeurbanne, who won seven and lost three.

Pool three is completed by European champions Panathinaikos of Greece and Dynamo Moscow, who clash in Russia on Thursday, and Ljubljana of Slovenia and Spain's Sevilla, who meet in Spain.

Both French sides will be at full strength apart from Villeurbanne's Ronnie Smith, a naturalised Frenchman, who is still recovering from a serious knee injury.

Pau then go on to meet former European Champions Limoges at home in the French Championship on Saturday.

Limoges face Estudiantes of Madrid on Thursday in their first match of the second phase in pool two.

They give debuts to their new foreign pair, Bosnian defence Nenad Markovic and American playmaker Trevor Ruffin, signed from Philadelphia.

TODAY AT

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PHILADELPHIA "1"

A Rob Cohen film
Sylvester Stallone in

DAYLIGHT

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PHILADELPHIA "2"

Richard Gere, Sean Connery
& Julia Ormond....in

FIRST KNIGHT

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

* The Hunchback of
Notre Dame

Shows: 12:00, 1:30, 5:00

* RANSOM

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"
Sylvester Stallone & Curt Russell...in

TANGO & CASH

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30

CONCORD "2"

Dumb and Dumber

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

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The Theatre is closed from
Dec. 15, 1996 until the start
of the Holy Month of
Ramadan in order to prepare
for a new play entitled

"Al Aman Ya Ho"

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Quarters postponed

Severe frost forced the postponement of the English League cup tie at home on Tuesday evening. The Ipswich V. Luton fixture was postponed to a later date. The Stockport V. Southport fixture was postponed to a later date. The Stockport V. Southport fixture was postponed to a later date.

Line for Forest job

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of Australian Open

John McEnroe has withdrawn from the Australian Open. McEnroe has withdrawn from the Australian Open. McEnroe has withdrawn from the Australian Open.

at Basle

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pean Basketball

French clash kick second phase. The French basketball team is preparing for the second phase of the competition. The French basketball team is preparing for the second phase of the competition.

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Bulls beat Jazz 102-89

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Jordan scored 13 of his 23 points in the first quarter as the Chicago Bulls got off to a fast start and avenged their first loss of the season with a 102-89 victory over the Utah Jazz on Monday.

Scottie Pippen scored 24 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed 16 rebounds for the Bulls, who won their first game of the season after losing to Utah on November 23.

"I was surprised about how we got out of the box," Jordan said after the Bulls posted their ninth consecutive home win. "We wanted to get out quickly and put them back on our heels."

Karl Malone had 27 points and 11 rebounds and John Stockton added 18 points and 11 assists for the Jazz, who trailed by as many as 26 points in the

second quarter. Utah is 6-7 over its last 13 games following an impressive 17-2 start to the season.

In Portland, Kenny Anderson's three-pointer with 51 seconds left snapped a tie and lifted the Trail Blazers to their fifth straight win, an 88-84 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Arydas Sabonis scored 24 points, Isaiah Rider added 17 and Anderson scored six of his 15 in the final 100 seconds for the Blazers.

Shaquille O'Neal had a game-high 34 points and pulled down 12 rebounds. But he was just 4-of-14 from the foul line and managed just two points in the final quarter as the Lakers saw their six-game winning streak snapped and lost for the first time in 11 games

against Pacific Division foes.

At Golden State, Glen Rice poured in a season-high 39 points and Anthony Mason added 27, including two key free throws with 40 seconds remaining, to lead the Charlotte Hornets to a 109-101 victory over the Warriors.

Valde Divac scored 18 points for the Hornets, who have won three of their last four games.

Larrell Sprewell led Golden State with 26 points, while Joe Smith added 23 and Mark Price 22, including three free throws that pulled the Warriors within 103-101 with 56 seconds to play.

But two free throws each by Mason, Divac and Rice sealed the Charlotte victory.

Australia cancels Jockey world series

SYDNEY (R) — Australian horse racing authorities on Tuesday cancelled plans to stage an inaugural World Jockeys' challenge later this month, blaming industrial action by jockeys seeking higher wages.

The challenge would have pitted six of the world's top jockeys, including Italian Frankie Dettori and French arc winner Olivier Peslier, against six of Australia's best riders.

The Australian Jockey Club (AJC) said on Tuesday it had called off the event following a strike by jockeys last Saturday and threats of further industrial action.

"The participating clubs felt it was unfair to embroil our international guests in a domestic dispute," AJC chief executive Tony King said in a statement.

The event would be rescheduled for the following year.

Australia's top jockeys called a snap strike on Saturday in pursuit of an increase in the fee for riding a leading horse to a uniform A\$130 (\$102).

The strike led to the cancellation of one race meeting, but most scheduled events went ahead with apprentice riders.

Racing clubs responded by hitting many of the jockeys with fines of up to A\$3,000.

A losing race fee currently varies between Australia's six states. In Queensland jockeys are paid A\$75, while their counterparts in New South Wales receive A\$65.

Schumacher fighting talk as Ferrari unveiled

MARANELLO, Italy (AFP) — The 1997 Ferrari Grand Prix car was unveiled Tuesday with star driver Michael Schumacher vowing to fight to regain the world championship.

Ferrari president Luca Di Montezemolo and sporting director Jean Todt were more cautious and only hoped to improve on Ferrari's three 1996 victories.

Schumacher, world champion in both 1994 and 1995, also added a note of caution that sport was unpredictable and that errors by him or the car could compromise their chances to put pressure on the leaders.

Schumacher said while he expected progress this season, he saw Ferrari's real potential coming in 1998 and 1999, which is why he had committed to a three-year deal with the team.

The 1997 Ferrari F310B is a fairly conventional Formula One car, with much carried over from last year's F310 model to ensure basic reliability, said chief designer John Barnard.

Barnard and engine designer Paolo Martinelli have already programmed a series of improvements, held back so the new car can start testing at Ferrari's Fiorano test track Wednesday, eight weeks before the first 1997 Grand Prix in Melbourne, Australia.

"There was a very big effort to get the car finished to allow plenty of time for development," said Barnard. After four days at Fiorano, the team will have three test periods at Jerez, Spain, later this month and in February.

Ferrari's tough 1996 season was marked by repeated failures, notably in three successive races in July. Barnard retained the 1996 car's rear construction, suspension and seven-speed transverse titanium gearbox, whose faults are now said to be resolved. A new longitudinal gearbox will be mounted about mid-season, after extensive testing, he said.



Ferrari's German driver Michael Schumacher (R) and his teammate Eddie Irvine pose for photographers during the official presentation of the new Ferrari F1 car F310B in Maranello (Reuters photo)

ed failures, notably in three successive races in July.

Barnard retained the 1996 car's rear construction, suspension and seven-speed transverse titanium gearbox, whose faults are now said to be resolved. A new longitudinal gearbox will be mounted about mid-season, after extensive testing, he said.

Track testing of the 046/2 engine, an evolution of the 1996 unit, also starts Wednesday. Martinelli said it was proven to be reliable but needed more horsepower and better flexibility.

Schumacher will start the testing with teammate Eddie Irvine taking a larger role than last year, Todt said. Ferrari test driver

Nicola Larini has moved to Sauber and a replacement will not be announced for some weeks," Todt added.

The launch was the first public appearance of British engineer Ross Brawn, who joined Ferrari recently and worked with Schumacher at Benetton for more than four years, including two world championship seasons.

Brawn will be technical coordinator at Maranello, and Schumacher praised him as someone who can always get the best out of anyone no matter how difficult they are.

Barnard's second spell at Ferrari in the past 10 years expires in mid-year and he confirmed he was negotiating about the future.

"I want to stay in Formula One," Barnard said. "I've put a lot of effort into Ferrari and I don't want to see that wasted. I always seem to leave before the final prize (is won)."

"There's a way we can work together, but it's probably not in the same way we do now," said Barnard, who said he had not wanted to extend his fundamental design centre work in Britain to on-going development during race season.

He also acknowledged he would be very pleased to work with Alain Prost who is trying to take over the Ligier team, but said that team would need a lot of building up.

Italian touring world on motorcycle arrives in Jordan

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A man cruising the world on his motorcycle with a quest for culture and travel has now motored into Jordan.

Carlo Muttoni, an Italian graphic designer working in Los Angeles, was quite content with his life, having all the things many people strive for before he set on his journey.

"I had a nice job and girlfriend — I was perfectly set. I just wanted a twist to my life," Mr. Muttoni told the Jordan Times Tuesday.

It was in 1993, while visiting New York, when Mr. Muttoni bought his vehicle of travel — a BMW motorcycle that he

nicknamed 'stewpot' after a sleigh dog that helped the first woman to ever win a sleigh race in Anchorage.

He then hit the great highway through Canada, Alaska, Oregon, California, Mexico and down into South America before shipping his bike to New Zealand.

"I stop long enough to speak with different people, learning the culture and working when I run out of money," he said.

Mr. Muttoni then travelled on through Australia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and has now parked his motorcycle in Jordan.

"I love Jordan, the people are so friendly, they have taught me a lot about their

culture," he exclaimed with twinkling eyes and a huge smile.

"While in this country I have walked in a forest, met amazing bedouins in the desert, and the colours...the silvery green and brown all around is stunning," he added.

From Jordan Mr. Muttoni plans on motorcycling into Jerusalem and then on into "the great continent of Africa" for his final journey.

Upon his return to Milan, Mr. Muttoni plans on writing a book about his travels.

"I might enjoy some routine, but the first thing is just to hug my family," he said.



Around-the-world French sailor Raphel Dinelli (L) waves with Pete Goss aboard the yacht Aqua Quorum just out of Hobart. Goss rescued Dinelli almost a fortnight ago from a raft after his boat overturned in rough seas (Reuters photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAN HIRSCH

HOW MANY CARDS IN THE MAJORITY?

Neither vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 10 7 4
♥ A K 5
♦ A J 10 7
♣ A 10 5

EAST
♠ J 8 5
♥ Q 8 4 2
♦ Q 10 8 5
♣ Q 8 6

SOUTH
♠ 5 3
♥ Q J 10 9
♦ K Q 6 5
♣ A K 7 2

The bidding: WEST NORTH EAST
10 16 20 Pass
30 Pass 40 Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠.
The argument still rages about the merits of five-card vs. four-card major-suit opening bids. What would many of these players have thought had they known our old friend the late Adam Meredith, a British internationalist and one of the world's great players, who was wont to open with a three-card major, especially spades.
More often than not, after one of

Meredith's eccentric three-card major opening bids his side would end in a 3-4 Mexican fit, usually very playable. But once in a while things did not go according to plan, and Meredith would have to declare a rather inelegant game on a 3-3 fit. This was the case on this hand. The ideal contract is five diamonds but, even with 26 high-card points and a ruffing value in the combined hands, it is no bargain.

There was little to the play. The defenders started with three rounds of spades, declarer ruffing the last. The jack of hearts was run, followed by the ace and king, declarer discarding a club. That picked up West's queen and left East with the only trump in the game.

Declarer cashed the king and jack of diamonds, then successfully finessed in clubs. All that was left to do was to run minor-suit winners, starting with diamonds, and hope that it was East who would eventually ruff. Since East was out of spades, declarer would then make the rest.

Your usual humdrum contract that needed nothing more than a 4-3 trump break with a particular defender holding the length and two finesses to succeed. At least that's better than no chance at all!

JORDAN TIMES

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Packers, Patriots, Panthers and Jaguars in NFL final four

The Associated Press

Green Bay? Sure. New England? It's happened before. Carolina and Jacksonville? Come on.

What better way could there be to punctuate this unusual U.S. National Football League season than with two second-year teams vying for spots in the Super Bowl? The Panthers secured their spot Sunday by dethroning the Dallas Cowboys 26-17. The Jaguars got into the final four on Saturday with a 30-27 win at Denver.

The Packers and Patriots will be hosts of the conference title games next Sunday. Green Bay eliminated San Francisco 35-21 on Saturday, a day before New England ripped Pittsburgh 28-3.

While the odds of either expansion franchise getting this far in its second year were astronomical, not having the Cowboys, 49ers, Steelers or Buffalo Bills in the championship games is surprising, too. It's the first time since 1991 either Dallas or San Francisco didn't make it that far, and the first time since 1989 the Bills or Steelers weren't there. "It's a new order in the

NFL," said Panthers linebacker Kevin Greene, "and I'm tickled to death about it."

The Packers seemed destined to get to this game all season, particularly when the Cowboys and 49ers were forced to play in the wild-card round. But their general manager, Ron Wolf, believes it took the victory over San Francisco for his team to receive its due.

"Really and truly, there is a lot of doubt among NFL teams about this football team," he says. "I don't know why that is. And I think today we erased any doubt."

Green Bay never has lost a playoff game at Lambeau Field, which will be resodded after the muddy turf was ripped up Saturday. It's offense is rolling, but so did Carolina's against a Dallas defense ranked third in the league.

Of course, the Packers had the top-ranked defense, and the Panthers aren't the same at home (9-0) as on the road, while the pack also has won all its home games this season.

"They looked good," Packers tight end Mark Chmura said. "They've been playing that way all year long. They beat San

Francisco twice, like we did. And beating Dallas was a big game for them."

"This is going to be another tough game for us. We're sure glad it's here."

That could be a major edge for Green Bay. But the Panthers aren't shying away from the challenge after their eighth straight win.

"We have to brave the elements and find some ways to make plays," said Carolina's Dom Capers, the 1996 coach of the year. "They have been a great team, but I've been saying, 'if you want the chance to be the man, you got to beat the man.'"

They beat the men from Dallas with superb defense, picking off three of Troy Aikman's passes, strong running by Anthony Johnson (104 yards) and two TD passes by Kerry Collins.

"We believe in ourselves," team president Mike McCormack said. "They've got great chemistry. It's something you keep saying over and over again, but if there's any secret, that's it."

While Carolina is the league's hottest team, the Jags are just behind with seven successive victories. They needed their last five

just to get into the playoffs. Then they won at rich stadium, where the Buffalo Bills were unbeaten in the playoffs. And they followed with an eerily similar decision — by the same 30-27 score — at Denver, where the Broncos were 8-0 this season.

Jacksonville has done it with offense, led by Natrone Means, who has rushed for 175 and 140 yards in the two playoff games. Quarterback Mark Brunell has been phenomenal, making all kinds of big plays with his arm and his feet. Mike Hollis is 6-for-7 on field goals, with his only miss from 58 yards.

"We're playing the best football of the season, and it's at the right time," coach Tom Coughlin said. "We've eliminated the turnovers, shut down the penalties and had solid performances when we've needed them."

"We've had an uncanny ability to do what is necessary to win over the last seven or eight weeks."

Coughlin is a disciple of Patriots coach Bill Parcells, for whom he worked in New York. The

Maid Missing



The Filipino maid Rusal R. Bans left the house of its employer on Jan. 1, 1997 and did not come back since then. Any body who knows about her whereabouts is kindly requested to call Shmeisani police centre or the nearest police station. Any one who tries to cover up for her will be legally responsible.

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Theatre is closed for 15. 1996 until the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan in order to prepare a new play entitled Al Aman Ya Ho

Iraqis dig for missile parts under U.N. eyes

...AGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraqi bulldozers have begun excavating a ballistic missile site close to Baghdad under the eye of U.N. inspectors in an attempt to prove Iraq has destroyed all its long-range rockets, a U.N. official said on Tuesday.

Goran Wallen, head of Baghdad's Ongoing Monitoring and Verification Centre (OMV), said seven U.N. missile experts had arrived in Baghdad on Monday and were supervising the digging. Both U.N. and Iraqi experts will examine the findings, he said.

"The excavation is taking place under an Iraqi initiative in a bid to prove to us that it has really destroyed all its operational missiles," Mr. Wallen told reporters.

The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) overseeing the destruction of proscribed Iraqi weapons suspects that Baghdad might still possess a significant number of missiles with ranges beyond 150 kilometres which it is barred from keeping or manufacturing

under terms of the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire.

On Sunday a senior Iraqi official denied the presence of any such missiles in Iraq and said Iraqi experts would soon provide material evidence that all of them had been scrapped.

Mr. Wallen said the current row was over missile engines Iraq had imported from the former Soviet Union and claims to have unilaterally destroyed in 1992.

He declined to give the number of the engines in question but U.N. experts said earlier they could be more than 100.

The present U.N. team of 10 experts, under Frenchman Michael Bordin, is expected to stay in Iraq until the end of January.

Mr. Wallen declined to give the name of the site. He said UNSCOM would insist on taking scrapped missile parts dug up from another site abroad for analysis if the current Iraqi excavations yield nothing.

UNSCOM has most of the

engines, salvaged from another site close to Baghdad, packed in boxes ready for shipment. The rest are stored in warehouses under strict U.N. surveillance.

The U.N. Security Council censured Iraq late last year for refusing to allow the engines to be taken abroad for examination by experts.

UNSCOM chairman Rolf Ekeus failed to persuade Iraqi leaders to allow the parts to be shipped to the United States during his December visit to Baghdad. He is due in Baghdad in February to try again.

Iraq must satisfy the U.N. Security Council that it no longer possesses weapons of mass destruction for the blockade on its oil exports, imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, to be lifted.

Under a separate oil-for-food deal Iraq can export limited quantities of crude oil to buy humanitarian supplies to ease the suffering caused by the international sanctions.

Carbomb kills 13 and wounds 100 in Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — A car bomb blast in downtown Algiers killed 13 people and injured around 100 on Tuesday, sources said.

The toll could rise because several of the injured were in serious condition. It was the deadliest car bomb attack in Algiers in several months.

The blast occurred at 2:10 p.m. (1310 GMT) near the main post office and caused panic as pedestrians scattered in all directions, the witnesses said.

"There are many dead and wounded. It's panic," said one witness.

The car was in the middle of a major street, bustling with pedestrians in the mid-afternoon.

Security forces swiftly blocked off the area where the blast occurred and dozens of ambulances and fire vehicles were on the scene.

Witnesses said the explosion happened between a college and the college's cafe on Didouche Mourad Street, formerly Mikhel Street. They confirmed a bus had been engulfed in flames.

Local residents all feared a higher casualty toll and one witness said that at least eight

people had been killed in the attack while scores had been injured.

Hundreds of residents fled from the city centre following the blast which caused widespread damage, blowing out windows in nearby buildings, and scattering shards of metal from the exploded car more than 100 metres.

This latest attack comes just before the fasting month of Ramadan, set to begin around Jan. 10. Armed groups consider the Holy Month auspicious for a jihad, or holy war.

The blast follows a 10-day respite from violence in the capital, which last month was hit by a series of attacks in which at least 15 people were murdered and some 200 were wounded.

In total, an estimated 50,000 people have been killed in violence after Algeria was plunged into civil war in January 1992. Following the cancellation of a second round of elections which the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Earlier on Tuesday, security forces and fundamentalist rebels clashed near a town where guerrillas killed 18 people the day before.

At least two fundamentalists

were wounded in the operation, which involved large numbers of military and police officers and was continuing on Tuesday afternoon.

Security forces launched the operation when militants tried to return to Douaouda, where 18 civilians were massacred Monday. A further 18 people were wounded in the seaside town 30 kilometres west of Algiers.

Witnesses said more than 100 extremists took part in the attack, which targeted a working-class area known as the City of Olives on the edge of the town.

The killers, armed with automatic machine guns, forced their way into villagers' homes, in some cases blowing off the doors with explosives.

Shocked villagers said a six-month-old baby was among the victims. Two other children, aged six and eight, and several women, were also killed.

The militants reportedly reached the area by swimming across a normally dried-up riverbed, residents said.

In response, security forces, backed up by helicopters, began a major search operation, while many residents fled following the attack.

Cyprus rejects U.S. criticism of its purchase of Russian missiles

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Cyprus on Tuesday rejected U.S. criticism of its purchase of Russian anti-aircraft missiles and accused the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) of supplying weapons to Turkish troops occupying northern Cyprus.

"This criticism is totally unfair," government spokesman Yiannakis Cassoulides told Reuters.

"Similar criticism has never been raised against the presence of 35,000 Turkish troops illegally in Cyprus who are armed with American weapons... NATO weapons destined to be used against NATO enemies," he said.

The U.S. sharply criticised Cyprus on Monday for agreeing to buy the Russian missiles, saying it would introduce a new and destabilising element and undermine peace moves.

Turkey has occupied northern Cyprus since an invasion in 1974 in response to a short-lived coup engineered by the military ruling Greece. The island's division remains a source of tension between NATO partners Greece and Turkey.

Purchase of Russia's S-300 system, with a 145-kilometre range, is the Cypriot government's first step toward building a credible air defence system. The contract

was concluded last weekend but it was unclear when the missiles would be delivered.

Government officials say the missiles will be deployed only for defensive purposes. They have not disclosed how many Cyprus is buying.

The United States also criticised Russia for selling the missiles to Cyprus. This was rejected by Moscow which said the sale did not change the balance of forces on the island.

United Nations' resolutions on Cyprus have called on both sides to cut their military spending.

Tension along the U.N.-patrolled buffer zone dividing the island's two communities is at its highest for years, following the killing of four Greek Cypriots and one Turkish Cypriot in the area since last June.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the missile deal would not change the military balance on the divided island.

"There are no grounds to view the purchases of certain types of defensive weapon by the legal and internationally recognised government of the Republic of Cyprus as a threat to anyone," its chief spokesman told Itar-Tass news agency late on Monday.

The planned acquisition of the S-300 system from the

Russian state-controlled arms exporter Rosvooruzheniye would neutralise the air superiority Turkey has had since 1974.

Mr. Tarasov said Moscow was prepared to cooperate with other interested countries to seek a lasting settlement on the island within the framework laid down by the U.N. and based on its gradual demilitarisation, he said.

Tass quoted defence commentator General Nikolai Leonov as saying: "The main reason for the fuss is an attempt to squeeze Russia out of the world arms market and to strangle the military industrial complex so that the Russian defence industry loses its competitiveness."

Turkey said, meanwhile, it will never allow Cyprus to be united with Greece.

"Cyprus is a national cause and for Turkey, the Cypriot affair is situated above all others," Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan told a parliamentary group of his pro-Islamic Welfare Party.

"Turkey will never permit enosis (unification with Greece) by any means. That could be through southern Cyprus joining the European Union or other ways," he said.

"Turkey would do what is necessary, which could be to go for integration of northern Cyprus into Turkey."



ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS: The patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexy II, makes the sign of the cross during midnight Christmas mass in Moscow's Bngoyavlenski Cathedral. Orthodox Christmas is celebrated on Jan. 7 according to the old calendar (AFP photo)

Tehran denies role in attack on Uday

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Tuesday rejected Iraqi allegations implying that Tehran was involved in the attempted assassination last month of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al Sahaf has written to the United Nations accusing Tehran of supporting the Shiite Muslim opposition group Al Daawa Islamiyah, which claimed responsibility for the attack on Uday, the Iranian press reported.

The Iraqi minister was also seeking the extradition of the attackers, the press said.

"This is not the first time that Iraqi officials are fabricating baseless charges against Iran," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was quoted by Iran's official IRNA news agency as saying.

"The assassination is a domestic matter and it doesn't concern Iran. The Iraqi officials had better learn lessons from the past and seek good neighbourly relations instead," Mr. Velayati said.

Uday, 33, was wounded when gunmen opened fire as he was driving through the wealthy Al Mansour neighbourhood of Baghdad on Dec. 12. While he was recovering in hospital, Uday implied that Iran was involved.

"Those who stabbed us in the back are known and we know where they come from... They tested us for eight years," Uday said in an allusion to the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Iran's English language newspaper Iran News said in an editorial on Tuesday that Uday's behaviour was responsible for the assassination bid.

"Before making allegations against Iran, the Baghdad regime should take into consideration the fact that Uday is obnoxious and vain and very often behaves brutally against his adversaries," the newspaper said.

"Because of his irrational and erratic behaviour, he has made a lot of enemies inside the country who won't miss a chance to finish him off."

Iran News said several other opposition groups had claimed responsibility for the attack, adding that Uday had been the target of at least three attempts on his life.

Israeli fair opens today against stiff opposition

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A controversial exhibition of Israeli products opens here Wednesday, with opponents of normalisation of relations with Israel bracing to stage a "human chain" to protest the event.

The exhibition is against a background of Arab anger against the headline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, after taking power in June, has delayed the implementation of agreements his predecessors signed with the Palestinians.

A self-styled "national committee for the cancellation of the Israeli trade fair" said Tuesday it was going ahead with a "human chain" of hundreds of political activists from opposition parties as well as various professional unions to prevent visitors from reaching the Israeli trade fair in Amman.

Officials said no permission was given for the protest action.

Ahmad Obeidat, a former prime minister who heads the "national committee," said his group, while determined to show its rejection of normalisation of ties with Israel, did not want trouble during the protest action.

"We do not want confrontation" with the authorities, Mr. Obeidat was quoted as saying in the local

press.

The government is unlikely to resort to tough action against demonstrators if only because the popular action bolsters its own criticism of the Israeli government's policy, observers said.

Opposition deputies led by lawmakers representing the Islamic Action Front (IAF) party as well as union leaders are expected to take part in the protest action.

Tight security was imposed Monday around the exhibition site, a hangar-style enclosure located about 20 kilometres south of Amman where major trade fairs and motor shows are usually held.

Many Jordanian businessmen said they were staying away from the four-day trade fair, the first of its kind to be held in Jordan after the Kingdom and Israel signed a peace treaty in October 1994.

They argue that the time is not appropriate for an Israeli trade fair in Jordan, given the problems facing the peace process.

But the organiser, the Amman-based International and National Expo Corporation (INEC), said the event was going ahead as scheduled.

Fakhri Nasser, chief executive of the INEC, asserted that "the opposition parties have little to contribute to national economic development whereas this trade fair

is my way of helping the economy."

"While I respect the right of the opposition parties to have their own viewpoint, I also hope that they would respect my right to my viewpoint," Mr. Nasser told the Jordan Times.

"Anyway," he said, "the opposition does not represent Jordanian majority opinion."

According to Mr. Nasser, some 70 Israeli manufacturers of consumer products, jewelry, garments and textiles are participating in the event. "I've sent out 10,000 invitations and I also expect at least 2,000 businessmen to visit the fair," he said.

Numerous advertisements have appeared in local newspapers calling on Jordanians to boycott the event.

"No normalisation with the occupier," read a front-page advertisement in all local newspapers. "No to the Israeli trade fair in Jordan," said the ad, released by the Jordan Engineers Association. At least in one daily an ad "no ad to normalisation with the Zionist enemy."

The Jordan Press Association, the umbrella body for all journalists in the Kingdom, has called on its members not to cover the event and to urge others to boycott it.

(Continued on page 7)

Mystery shots shatter calm in 3-week-old Peru hostage crisis

LIMA (AFP) — Three shots rang out before dawn Tuesday near the Japanese ambassador's residence here, shattering a tense calm in a three-week standoff between the Peruvian government and rebels holding 74 hostages.

President Alberto Fujimori's cabinet wrapped up an all-night cabinet meeting early Tuesday, but there was no word on any decisions coming out of the 11-hour talks.

The situation has apparently been sinking into a stalemate, with the regular mediators from the International Red Cross and Roman Catholic Church failing to enter the embassy on Friday and Monday.

The pre-dawn shots shattered a nearly week-long lull in a hostage crisis that began on Dec. 17, when Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (TMR) rebels seized hundreds of prominent Peruvians, Japanese and others at a gala reception. Hundreds were quickly released.

It was not immediately clear whether the shots fired at 3:55 a.m. (0855 GMT)

came from within the residence or from police stationed outside.

One police officer on the scene told reporters the shots "seemed" to be from an AKM rifle, an automatic assault weapon used by both Peru's police force and Tupac Amaru rebels.

Police said that the round of fire may have been accidental. On Dec. 26, a blast at the embassy residence was later blamed on a dog that accidentally tripped a mine set by the rebels.

The rebels continue to hold Japanese Ambassador Morihisa Aoki and Bolivian Ambassador Jorge Gurnacio, Japanese executives and top Peruvian government officials.

Bolivian Foreign Minister Antonio Aramibar, in town to try to gain the release of his ambassador, stopped by the embassy residence late Monday but did not enter. During his three-day stay, which ends Tuesday, he met with President Alberto Fujimori and a variety of other officials.

The rebels are demanding that the government release some 440 of their jailed comrades in exchange for

the hostages, and have called for an easing of economic policies that cut inflation here but also pushed up the poverty rate.

The lack of negotiations and public comment indicates that Mr. Fujimori is playing a waiting game, according to Vincent Canistraro, a former chief of counter-terrorism with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

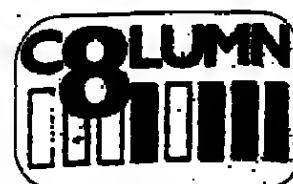
But Mr. Canistraro said that he expected the prolonged hostage-taking could be resolved without bloodshed on either side.

"I think that it is very clear that the hostage-takers don't want to kill anyone," he said. "The Peruvian government is very hard line in these things but not so hard line as to contemplate military action."

Sightseers from Lima have begun stopping by the Japanese residence and the spot has become a tourist destination for visitors from Canada, Japan and the United States.

"We were warned not to come to Peru, but the situation isn't as dangerous as

(Continued on page 7)



Witchdoctors dance for peace

LIMA (R) — Andean witchdoctors armed with skulls and potions sought to achieve what religious and civil leaders have failed to do during three weeks of pleas and petitions: convince rebels to end Peru's hostage crisis.

More than a dozen witchdoctors from the Peruvian highlands descended on the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, where guerrillas were still holding 74 hostages, for a colourful, 15-minute ceremony.

Mostly dressed in cloaks, ponchos and feathers, the witchdoctors chanted "we want peace," spat potions into the air, danced over machetes, held animal skulls aloft, burnt incense and freed doves.

Opponents meanwhile took advantage of the media spotlight on the hostage crisis to grab free publicity or sell their wares. When a man dressed as a robot strode up to the besieged residence last weekend, children speculated that a superhero had arrived to end the three-week siege, but he was just promoting "Metalman," a comic book.

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